

2d artist

Concept Art, Digital & Matte Painting Magazine | Issue 078 June 2012

Interview

Daren Horley

Articles

Sketchbook of
Paul Bonner

The Gallery

Andrew Seleznev,
Andreas Rocha, plus
more!

CLEOPATRA

Patipat Asavasena brings us his latest character in the Manga Historical Characters series, the hypnotically beautiful Cleopatra.

Designing Droids

All hell breaks loose as **Justin Albers** brings us the techniques behind the imposing figure of the Demolition Droid.

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Ignacio Bazan Lazcano and **Simon Dominic** serve up the catch of the day as they bring us two differing versions of the Cipactli.

Dreamscape

The dream is over, as **Jama Jurabaev** brings his fantastic Dreamscape series to a close, finalizing his short movie.

Cover Image by Patipat Asavasena



Editorial

Welcome to the June issue of 2DArtist magazine! In this issue we bring you more stimulating installments in our excellent tutorial series and continually captivating artwork. From creatures of mythology to digital matte painting, there's a little treat for everybody!

So many great tutorials continue this month, starting with the awesome cover image by Patipat Asavasena, who's also the artist guiding us through the manga series. In the third chapter, he presents a tutorial of the beautiful queen of Egypt, Cleopatra and shows us how to use a painterly approach to achieve an oil painting effect, and how an unexpected outcome can be the result of working with an improvisational method.

Jama Jurabaev finishes up the tutorial series on 2D animation in this issue. In the previous three chapters he has covered topics such as concept art, matte painting, animation and 3D, and in this final chapter he looks at how to bring everything together and finalize the short animated movie we have been working towards. He takes the live footage that he showed us how he filmed last month and shares tips about compositing them into his amazing images to ensure the final shot is realistic.

We are still going strong with our droid series; this time around sees Justin Albers create a demolition droid. He talks through his overall working method for completing these pieces in Photoshop, as well as communicating a little of his thought and design process.

Moving on to our next series, Mythological Creatures, we are in the capable hands of Ignacio Bazan Lazcano (who took on our droid series in the last issue) and Simon Dominic Brewer this month, as they tackle the mythical monster Cipactli – a creature known as being part fish and part crocodile. Take a closer look to find out how each of our artists interprets the same brief and comes up with their own version of this mix of different creatures, with Simon in Painter and Ignacio in Photoshop.

If that wasn't exciting enough, we also have a Making Of by Francesco Corvino, an interview with talented VFX artist Daren Horley and a sketchbook that takes us into a world of dwarves, goblins and demons, by the skillful concept artist, Paul Bonner. And, of course, our fantastic gallery featuring work by Vanja Todorovic, Serge Birault, Dor Shamir and many more gifted artists!

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Image by Daren Horley

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If you're having problems viewing the double-page spreads that we feature in this magazine, follow this handy little guide on how to set up your PDF reader!

Approach
This is a traditional painting, so I wanted to add a heraldic effect by drawing a grecian border around the central circle. A grecian border is a decorative border consisting of a repeating geometric pattern of interlocking arches or ovals, such as the Parthenon's frieze.

The Idea
I wanted to paint a scene of creating a mythological creature that interested me. The way I approached it was to draw a circle and then draw a border around it.

Technique
I used traditional oil paints to paint this. This is a relatively new style of painting that I have been developing recently. It's a bit like a traditional oil painting, but it's a bit more fluid and expressive. I think it's a good way to paint because it's a bit more forgiving than traditional oil painting.

Colors
I used a lot of earthy tones, like browns and yellows, to create a sense of depth and atmosphere. I also used some blues and greens to create a sense of water and light.

Photos and Color
I took a lot of reference photos to help me with the details. I also used a color palette to help me with the colors.

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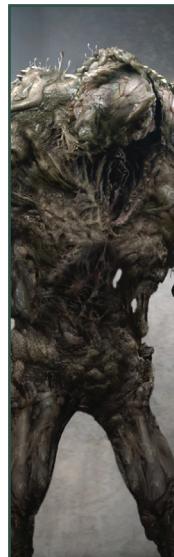
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Contributing Artists

Every month many artists from around the world contribute to **3DCreative** and **2DArtist** magazines. Here you can find out a bit more about them! If you would like to be a part of **3DCreative** or **2DArtist** magazine, please contact: simon@3dtotal.com



Daren Horley

Daren has been working as an artist since 1988, initially in illustration, moving to digital in the mid 1990's.



During that period, he has worked as a concept designer and texture painter on film, television and commercials.

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Francesco Corvino

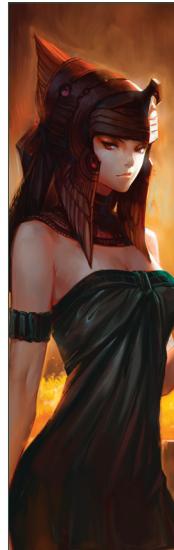
Francesco Corvino is an Italian professional Concept Artist and Digital Matte Painter based in Los Angeles, who has worked on feature films like World War Z, Wrath of the Titans, Abraham Lincoln Vampire Hunter and on commercials for clients such as Mercedes and Gillette.

His primary focuses are Concept Design, Digital

Matte Painting.

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Patipat Asavasena

Patipat Asavasena is a graduated engineer, but he decided to follow his passion in art. Currently, he's a full-time freelance artist living in Nonthaburi, Thailand. His work has been influenced by Japanese manga, but also has a wide-range of styles and is very interested in art, photography and technology.

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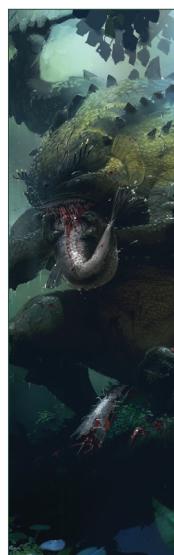


Jama Jurabaev

After Jama's graduation as an aerospace engineer in 2004 he never thought that his life will be spent working with digital art. But now he is working as a concept artist, and digital art has totally consumed his life. He has done a lot of illustrations for advertising agencies in the past and recently secured a position at MPC in London.

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Ignacio Bazan Lazcano

Lives in the beautiful city of Buenos Aires where he has been working for four years in the games industry as an illustrator and concept artist.

He currently works for TimeGate Studios where his tasks include developing the aesthetics of the game from the beginning of the process. In the future he'd like for Argentina to become well-known for its artistic talent.

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Contributors



Simon Dominic

Simon is a freelance illustrator specializing in fantasy, sci-fi, horror and the generally bizarre.

He paints digitally, applying traditional techniques through use of digital tools. He has worked on game art, book covers, editorial and magazine workshops since going pro in 2009.

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Would You Like To Contribute To 3DCreative Or 2DArtist Magazines?

We are always looking for tutorial artists, gallery submissions, potential interviewees, 'making of' writers, and more. For more information, please send a link to your work to: simon@3dtotal.com



Image by Justin Albers



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"Even if your ideas are diluted, you still played a part in developing the look of the design"



DAREN HORLEY

Daren is a talented VFX artist who is part of the award-winning team at Framestore in London. He divides his time between VFX and concept designing, and in this interview he tells us a bit about how he got involved in the industry, the amazing projects he has been a part of and how he fills his time between projects.

Hi Daren and thanks for agreeing to be interviewed for *2DArtist* magazine. I am aware that you have worked on some amazing projects, but I don't know too much about the specifics of what you do. Can you tell us a little about how you became involved with the CG industry and what it is that you spend your time doing these days? I am joint head of the texture painting department at Framestore in London. I started working there in 1997 as the sole texture painter in the *Walking with Dinosaurs* VFX team. Initially I was purely texture painting, but it soon became apparent that it would be useful to also carry out design tasks. The role grew to lead and then department head as the company expanded.

On those *Walking with Dinosaurs* shows, design became part of the pipeline as well as painting. I have encouraged this element of the company, and it has always been part of the painter role

for those who feel so inclined. In recent years, a dedicated concept design department has been established, and I divide my time between VFX and concept designing.

It must be great to work on a project from start to finish, having input along the way.

Do you ever find that you can get protective over your work or see changes made to your designs you would like to avoid?

Often the design work takes a whole lot of turns and maybe doesn't go in the direction you'd like it to, but that's part of the job: exploration and experimentation. Even if your ideas are diluted, you still played a part in developing the look of the design.

You have worked on some amazing projects including *Clash of the Titans*, *Prince of Persia* and *The Dark Knight*. What it is like to work on big projects like this?

Working on a big film project comes in two phases for me: design, then VFX. They both require a similar, though distinct, set of skills. The VFX element is very closely directed by various supervisors on the show, so it's a case of following the brief very closely.

This process can span several months for a hero creature, with constant refining and detailing, changing and modifying, and working with other artists in the team such as the modelers and look dev TDs. The software used for texture painting is principally Mari, but also Photoshop, Maya and sometimes Nuke.

Can you share your approach to creating an image? Do you go straight in with paint or perhaps paint over a 3D base?

The pipeline is one of specialities, so everyone is focused on their particular area of expertise, and consequently producing work at a high





level. It's very competitive and barriers are constantly being pushed.

My other main task is designing for in-house shows and also projects that may go elsewhere for the VFX work. The design process is carried out at a very different pace. Typically an image will be created in a day. It may spill over to more time than that, depending on the level of finish and complexity. Some clients will like a sketchy, impressionistic quality in the initial design phase, but often a client will expect a very polished, photoreal image that looks close to how it would in a shot. This can pose a challenge, due to the fast turnaround pace.

I utilize a mixed approach, depending on what I feel is the best and most efficient way to work. Sometimes it's completely painted in Photoshop, sometimes it will be a blend of photo references and paint, and sometimes it will include some ZBrush modeling. I never submit a raw ZBrush render, partly because I'm fairly new to the software and partly because of time constraints. Also modeling to a high level of detail is time-consuming and painting allows you to create a more naturalistic image as it will contain color and textural information, which is often

as important as anatomy and form. A ZBrush render with a Photoshop paintover gives good results quickly, with no need for UVs or shaders. I find 3D renders are prone to sterility. They

can look too perfect if created in a hurry. The shadows can look too hard, and the detail too even. A good piece of concept art will draw the eye to the most important area of the







image, and leave other areas less detailed or shadowed/impressionistic.

ZBrush is just one tool in the palette and a great starting point. I battled with it briefly a few years ago, but found it a bit cumbersome. I returned to it recently and love the new tools, such as

new lighting. It takes too long to light something perfectly in 3D. I find it better to take it so far in 3D, then paint in shadows and highlights. Rim light, for example, is a signature of my images. Painting that in is by far the quickest and easiest way. Same goes for sub surface effects; light filtering through a membrane is best painted.

Of all the huge projects you have worked on, what has been your favorite and why?

One of the most enjoyable films I've worked on would be *Your Highness*. It was a relatively small, low budget affair, but that's why it was so enjoyable. Often the lower budget means that the client will hand over more creative input, as they want it all to flow fast. On larger films they do this less. I got to design the creatures and then texture paint them, with a lot of my ideas remaining intact. The fact that they changed their mind three times about the look after the shot ready assets were completed, is something that I'll put to the back of my mind because it was still fun.

"I love that you can start with a sphere and pull it into anything, just like with real clay"

DynaMesh. The ability to retopologize on the fly is essential. It's revolutionized the sculpting process. I love that you can start with a sphere and pull it into anything, just like with real clay.

When I paint over a render, I like to use it as a base rather than just paint in texture. I'll sometimes cut it up with Photoshop and repose it, use various renders combined and paint in

What do you do in between projects? Do you find yourself filling your time by creating more art or do you like to get away from the computer and get inspiration from the things you can see around you?

Out of hours, I rarely paint for pleasure. Much as I would love to create images for myself, I'm keen to get away from a computer monitor as it's been my slave master all week. I have two kids who take up all my spare time. They're at an age where family time is important.

Creating a personal image is rewarding, but I've been working for 25 years. I don't feel the need to prove to myself that I can paint. Improve maybe; there's no such thing as perfection. You can always learn new tricks. If I were to get more spare time, (that won't happen any time soon), I would probably go back to painting canvases using oils. Maybe one day.

I can certainly relate to becoming a slave to your computer! Does working for a big



company on huge, high-pressure jobs ever take the enjoyment out of working on these projects or do you still enjoy it as much as you did on your first day?

When I first started working in VFX, I had previously worked in illustration, but had always wanted to work in the film industry. *Walking with Dinosaurs* was not only a break into that field, but I also had a real interest in dinosaurs, so that was a totally dream scenario for me. For the whole 18 months I didn't feel like I was working, it was so much fun. It was very intense; it doesn't get much more high-pressure than that project.

Subsequently, there aren't many shows that are an easy ride. Demands are higher than ever, there is an extreme level of perfection in all work, and a lot of u-turns and side-steps. You end up re-working an awful lot. There's a period





on a show when it's enjoyable, but it does get to a stage when you get fatigued and long for the next project.

It's rare to stay fresh the whole stint; you feel burned out towards the end. When that happens, you need to try to re-invigorate

somehow, maybe take a new approach and think it through from a different angle. It's amazing how a short break from a task can clear the mind and make you re-evaluate your prior work. Concepts often allow this as there are usually multiple projects on the go at once and you may be working on a totally different

task for a while, then return and find your second wind.

I saw some of the *Wrath of the Titans* work that you did today and after picking my jaw up off the floor I started to think about what it must be like to see work like this on the



big screen. Do you enjoy seeing your work in the cinema?

When it comes together it's worth the strain that it took to get there. Seeing shots over and over daily, or endlessly re-working a concept, kind of makes you too close to it. It gets difficult to be objective. That's where working in a team helps; you can benefit from a fresh pair of eyes to look at your work.

I haven't seen *Wrath* yet. I've seen the Cyclops shots – they were done at Framestore. What I've seen from the trailers looks great. It's my kind of film: monster-heavy! I don't mind if the movie is successful or not, or whether it's actually any good or not. There's still value in being involved in the creative process.

Thanks for taking the time to chat to us Daren.

It's been a pleasure.

Daren Horley

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and <http://gondwana.cghub.com/>

Email: darakemi@btopenworld.com

Interviewed by: Simon Morse







Meet modo.
Luxology



"I always try and establish some character first, before I plan to paint in too much detail"

SKETCHBOOK

of Paul Bonner

This month's sketchbook shows concept artist, Paul Bonner's Dwarves, Goblins and epic sized demons. With the use of just pencil and paper, he shows us how he gives character and expression and the importance of establishing a relationship between the characters and environment early on in the creative process.

Sketchbook of Paul Bonner

Dwarves has always been a favorite subject of mine. It's a regular challenge to try and give them some character and expression, when their mouths are usually invisible. They are not dwarves if they don't have luxurious facial hair (**Fig.01**)!



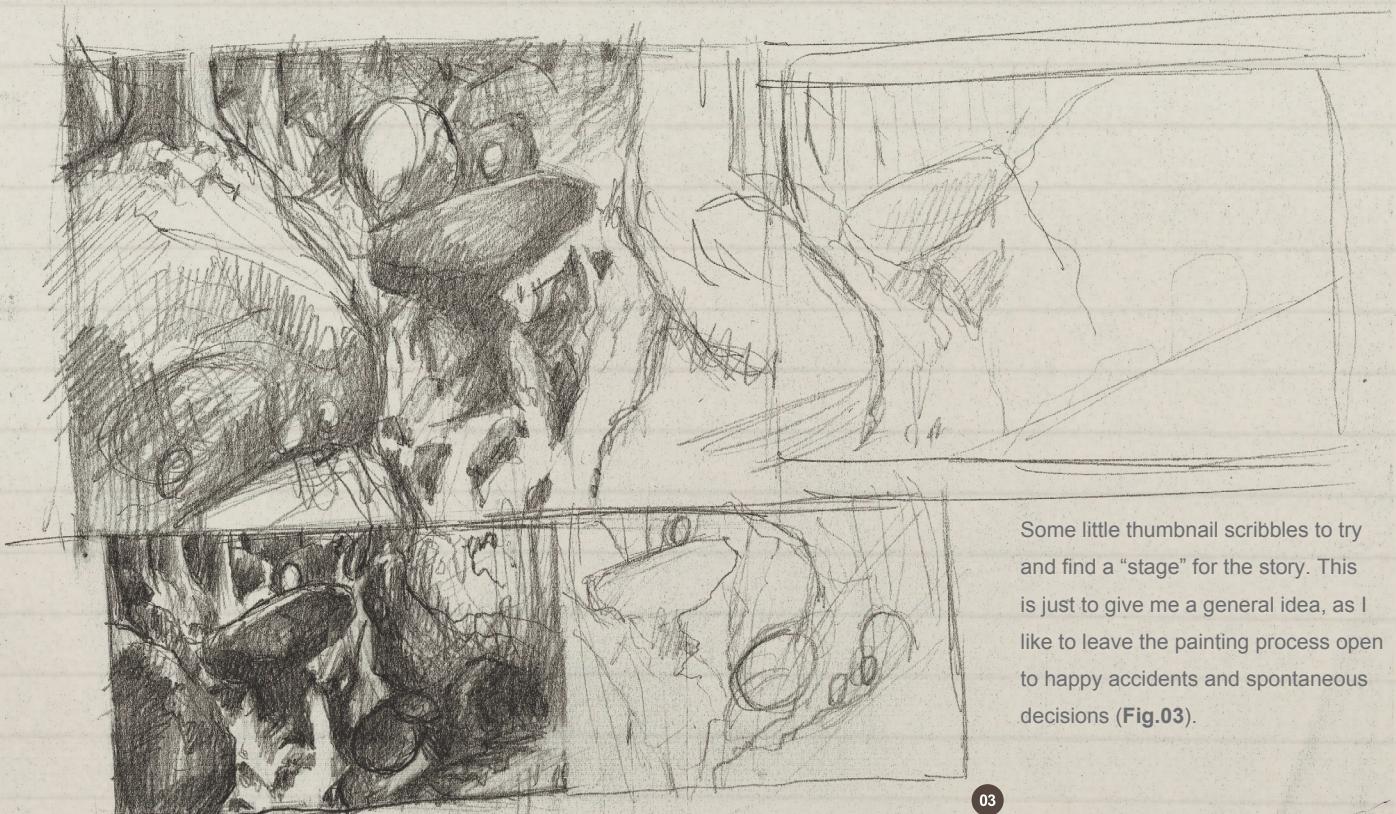
01

This dwarf was better with his mouth closed anyway. The more obvious choices often don't work as well as the more subtle (Fig.02).



02

Some little thumbnail scribbles to try and find a "stage" for the story. This is just to give me a general idea, as I like to leave the painting process open to happy accidents and spontaneous decisions (Fig.03).

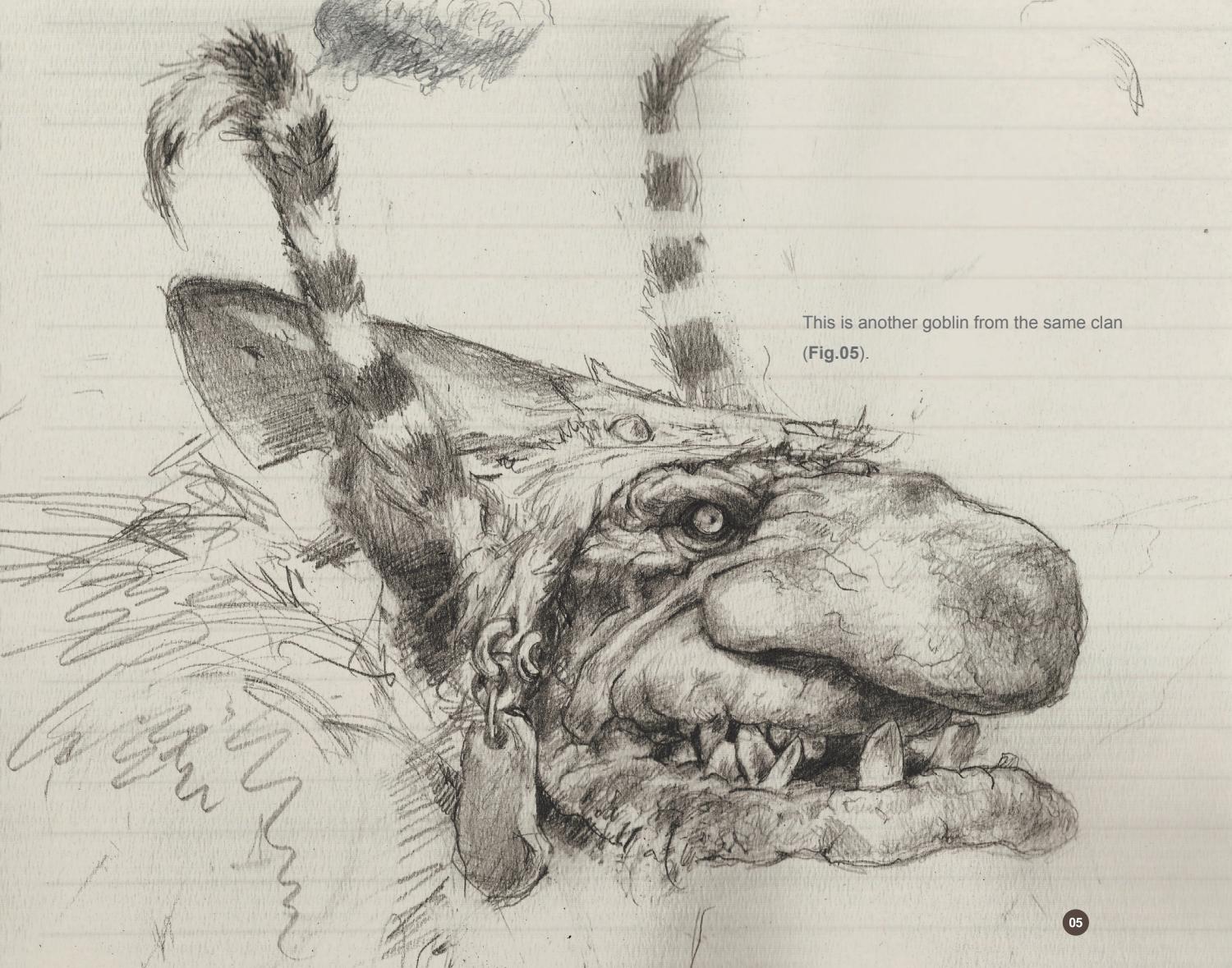


03



04

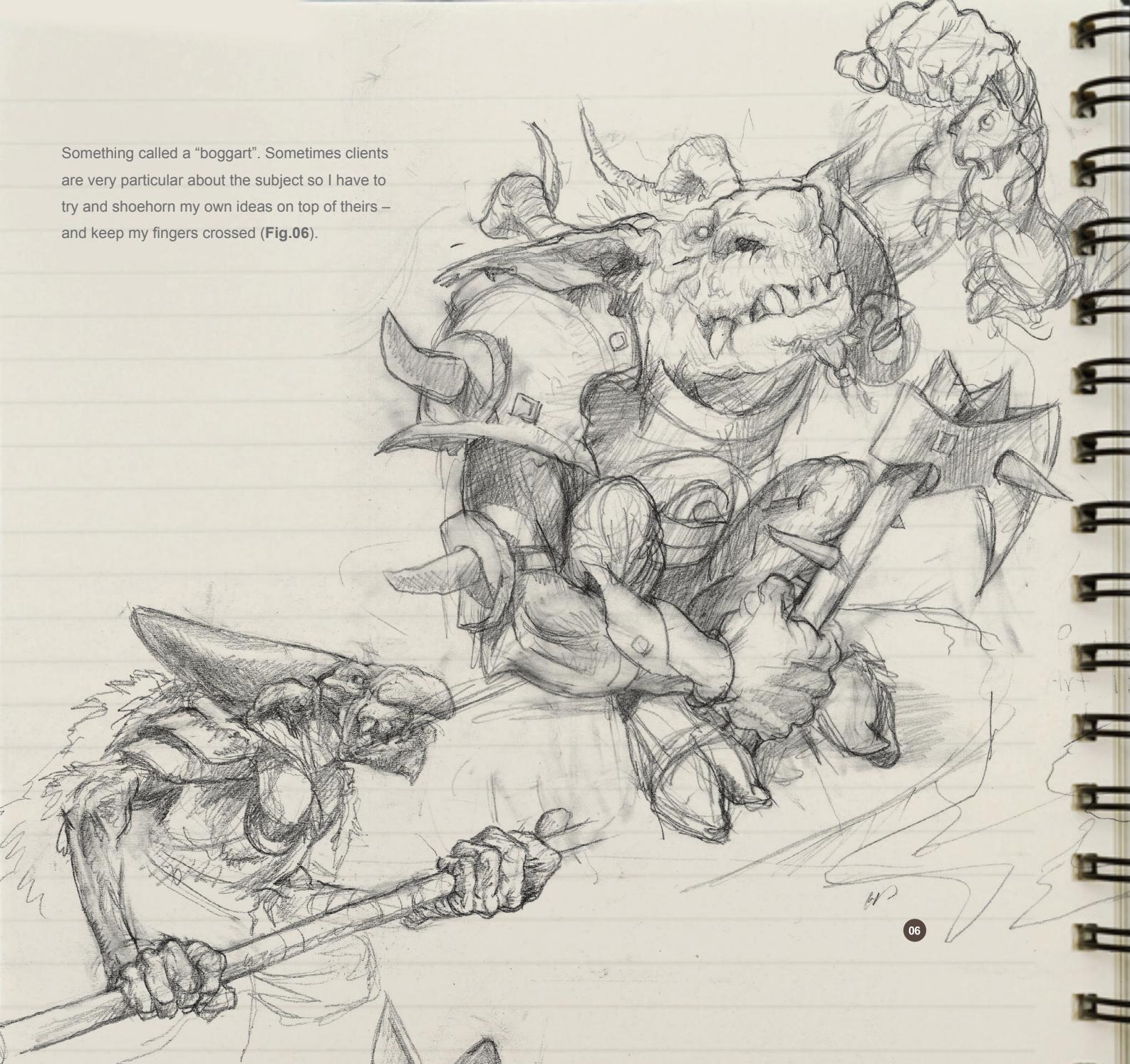
Goblins! They are feral and savage, up to no good in the silent depths of the forest. I always try and establish some character first, before I plan to paint in too much detail (Fig.04).



This is another goblin from the same clan (Fig.05).

05

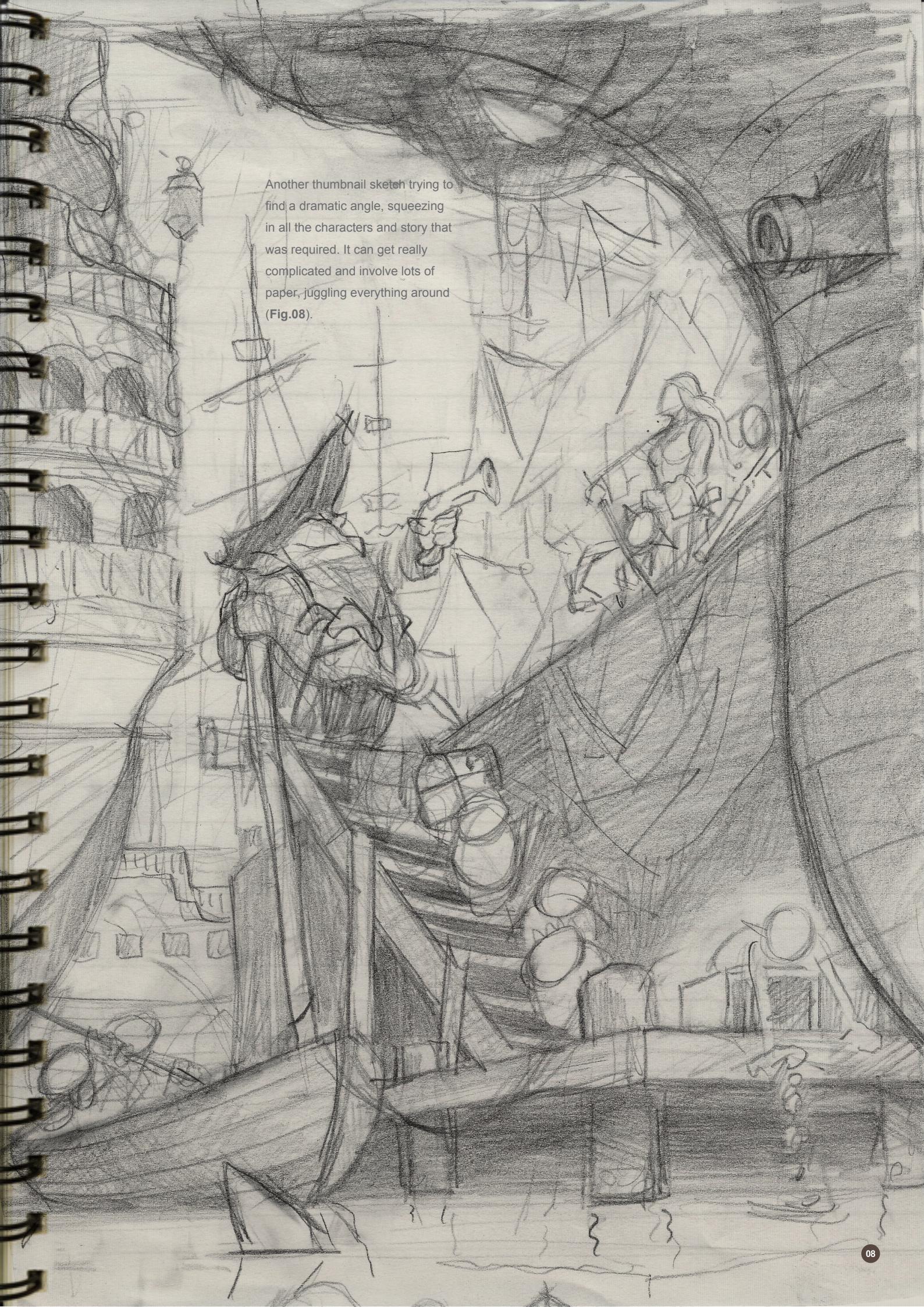
Something called a "boggart". Sometimes clients are very particular about the subject so I have to try and shoehorn my own ideas on top of theirs – and keep my fingers crossed (Fig.06).



The tiniest adjustments can alter the body language and character, so sometimes I just have to make a decision and go with it; otherwise it's a never-ending process (Fig.07).



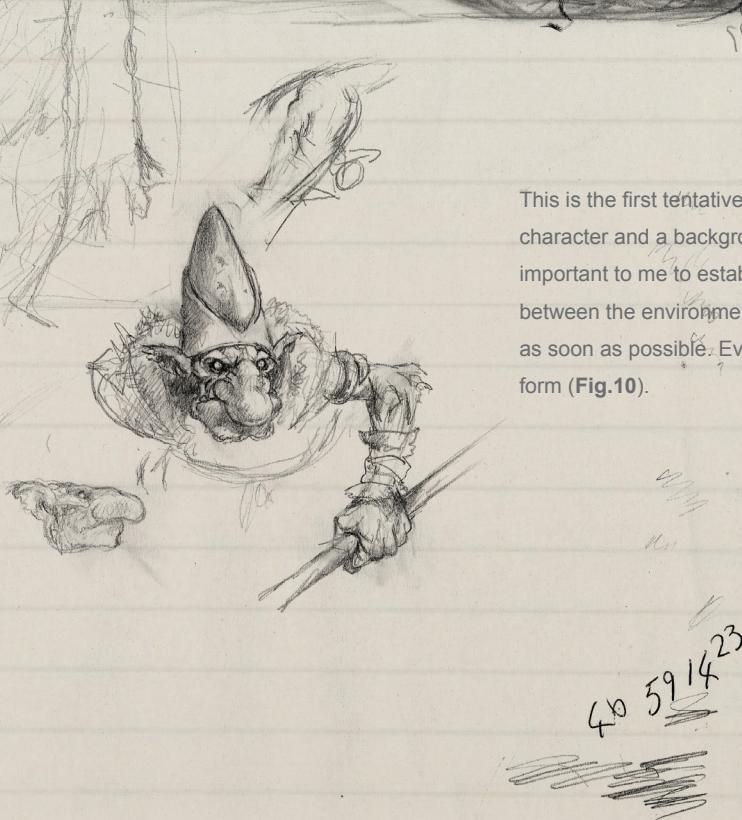
Another thumbnail sketch trying to find a dramatic angle, squeezing in all the characters and story that was required. It can get really complicated and involve lots of paper, juggling everything around (Fig.08).



Just one character here: a demon, up in the heavens. Thankfully it's straightforward (Fig.09).



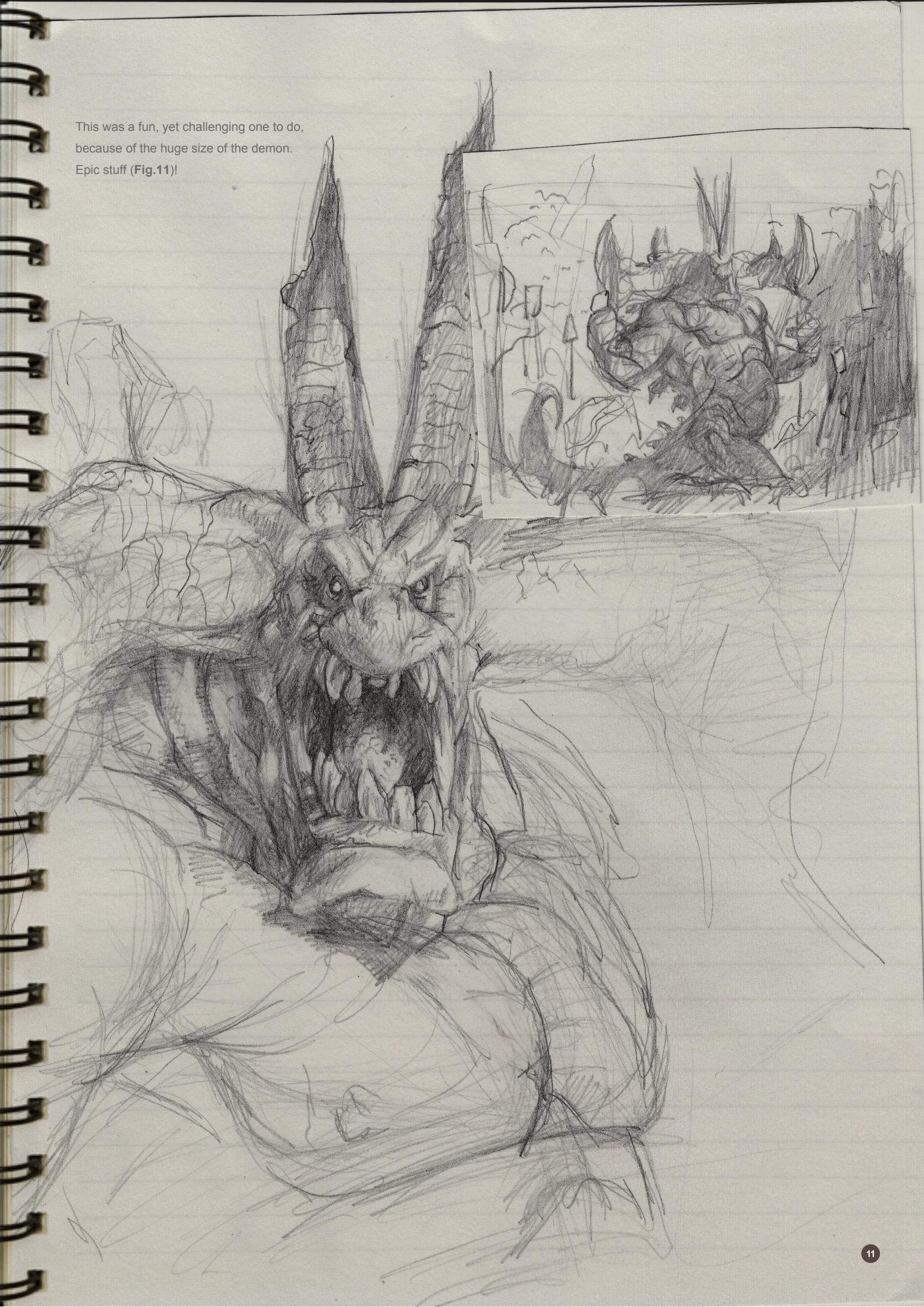
This is the first tentative meeting of a character and a background. It's very important to me to establish a relationship between the environment and the characters as soon as possible. Even in its most basic form (Fig.10).



This was a fun, yet challenging one to do,

because of the huge size of the demon.

Epic stuff (Fig.11)!



A dwarf with a mouth! I guess if he's scared enough he's going to open it – and this one is scared. It was for my *Beowulf* project (**Fig.12**).

I liked the scribble on the left, but found it necessary just to tweak the angle a bit. Not being afraid to start over or try other solutions is absolutely vital for any kind of progress. Never be satisfied or be afraid to make mistakes (**Fig.13**).

12

13

Paul Bonner

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Vue image by Kazuya Hashimoto (winner of the 3D Environment Competition 2011)



Vue image by Luigi Marini



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THE

GALLERY

This month we feature: Andrew Seleznev | Andreas Rocha | Rafael Nascimento | Serge Birault | Victorior
Yuriy Mazurkin | Vanja Todoric | Dor Shamir | Gia Nguyen Hoang | Claudio Rodval

**Rainy Day**

Gia Nguyen Hoang

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(Above)

The Dreamer

Victorior

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(Below)





DARS



The Seven Deadly Sins Show

Dor Shamir

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Witch Flying on a Walnut**Vanja Todoric**<http://vanjatodoric.blogspot.com/>

vanja3d@gmail.com

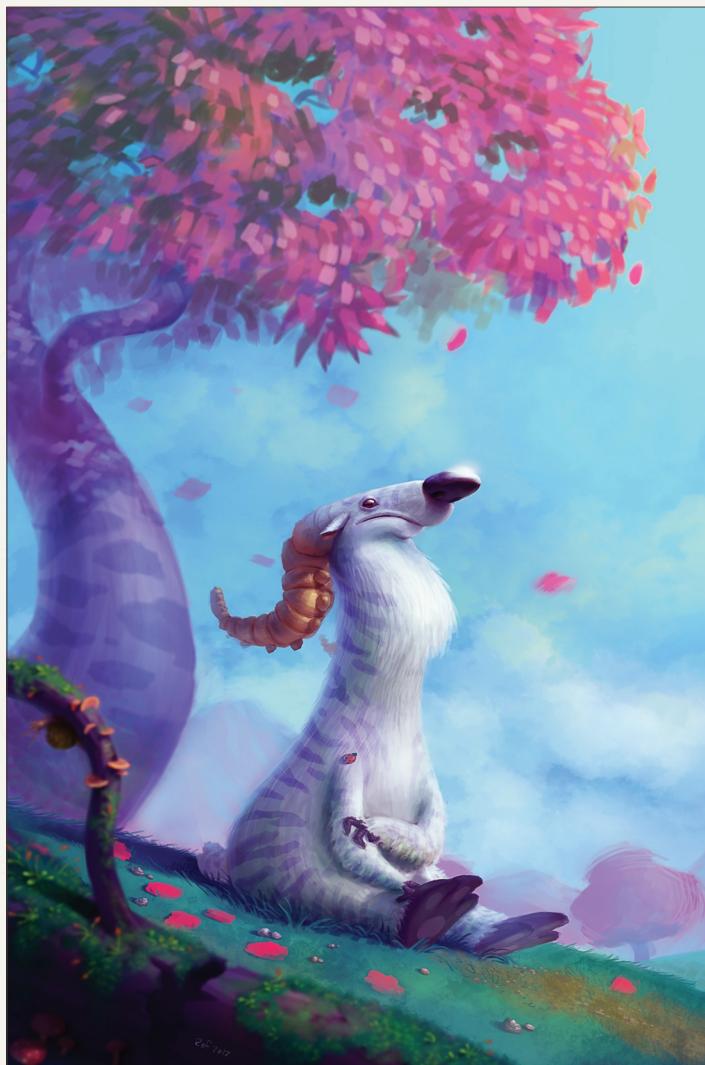
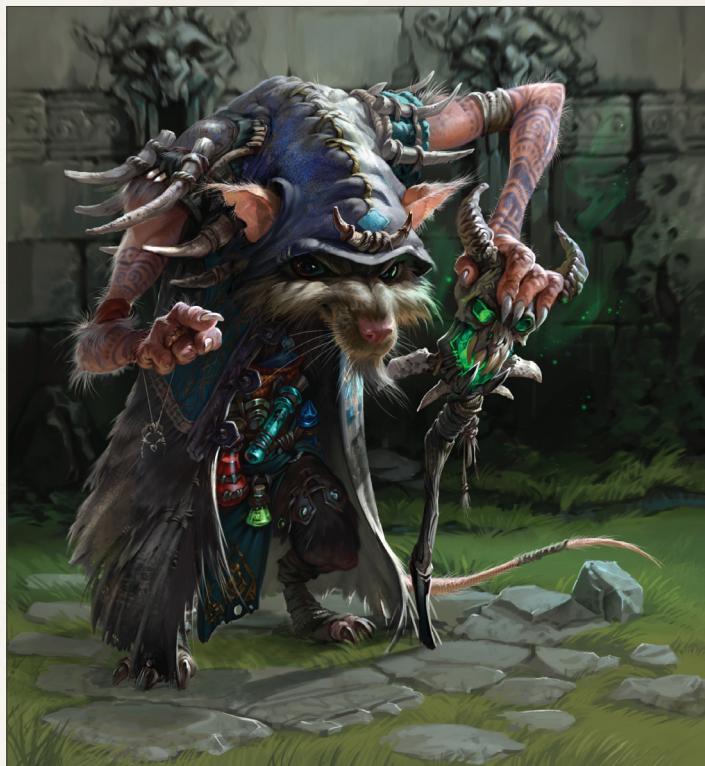
(Right)

**Who We Really Are****Claudio Rodval**<http://gentlesquid.com>

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(Below)



**Rat Magician****Andrew Seleznev**dron111@hotbox.ru

(Top Left)

Womanhood**Yuriy Mazurkin**<http://mazurkin.com>mazurkin2007@rambler.ru

(Top Right)

The Wait**Rafael Nascimento**<http://rafaelnascimentoart.blogspot.com>rafaelp.nascimento@hotmail.com

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A.ROCHA
2011

Winter Village

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MANGA

HISTORICAL CHARACTERS



CHAPTER 03 - CLEOPATRA

There are obviously many different styles of art that originate from different countries and cultures around the world. One of the most popular of these styles is what we know as manga. In this tutorial series we will be covering how to create our own manga characters using many of the recognizable features that we see in this style of art. Our tutor for this fantastic five-part series will be insanely talented artist **Patipat Asavasena**, who shows us at how to put his tips into practice whilst painting some super-cool manga historical characters.

Manga Historical Characters Chapter 03 – Cleopatra

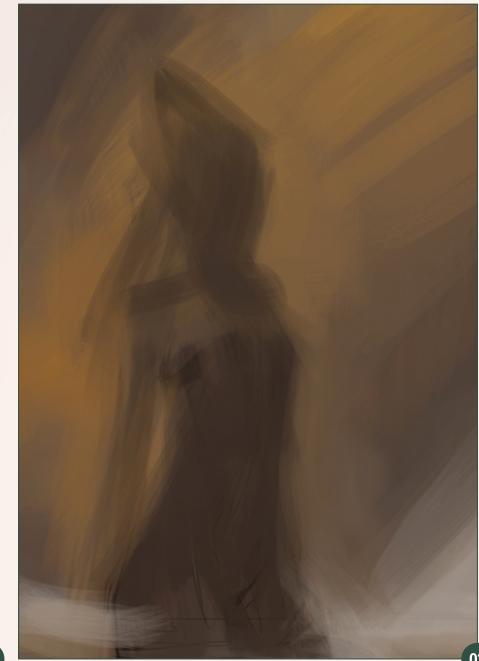
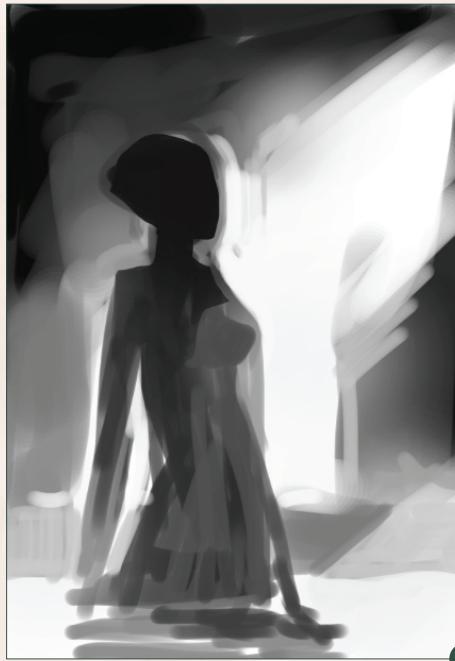
Chapter 03 – Cleopatra

Software Used: Photoshop

Introduction

For this tutorial I was presented with the task of painting the charming and beautiful queen of Egypt, Cleopatra, in a manga style. As you will see, I took a painterly approach to this painting, whilst trying to achieve the look of oil paints.

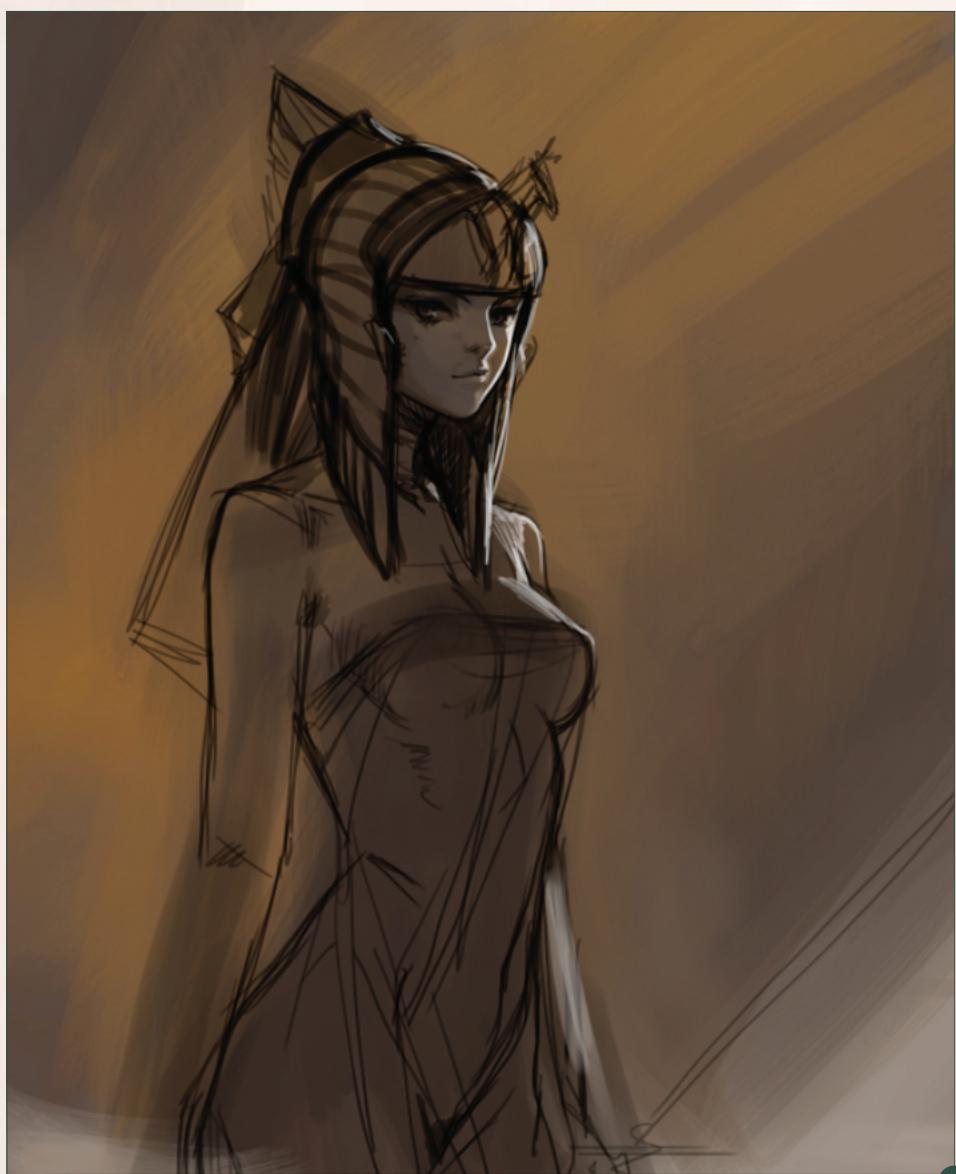
This challenge created some unexpected results and also took much more time than usual.



Idea and Concept

Although I didn't spend time working on sketches or thinking about the composition, like I did in my other tutorials, I did have to think about the direction I wanted to take the image in before I got started. If I hadn't set myself a specific goal, I might just have continued to paint without really getting anywhere. So to start with I had a good think about the concept.

I wanted to illustrate Cleopatra and capture how attractive she was in a portrait painting. I thought hard about her posture, silhouette and the lighting scheme. I spent quite a lot of time thinking before I started doing anything in Photoshop.



Preparing the Canvas

To begin with I started to randomly paint onto an A4 size canvas at 300dpi with some brushes. This process helps me to warm up and it also makes me think about interesting textures. When I was happy to get started I used a large round brush to sketch the character and color scheme (**Fig.01 – 02**). I also used some photo references to help inspire her costume. Finally I used a small round brush to refine the detail, add the eyes and paint in some rim light (**Fig.03**).

Adding Color and Light

I added a saturated orange color for the light in the background and a saturated dark red on the character to create a subsurface scattering effect (**Fig.04**). If you hold your hand up to the

light you will see a good example of this effect, and without it skin doesn't look believable.

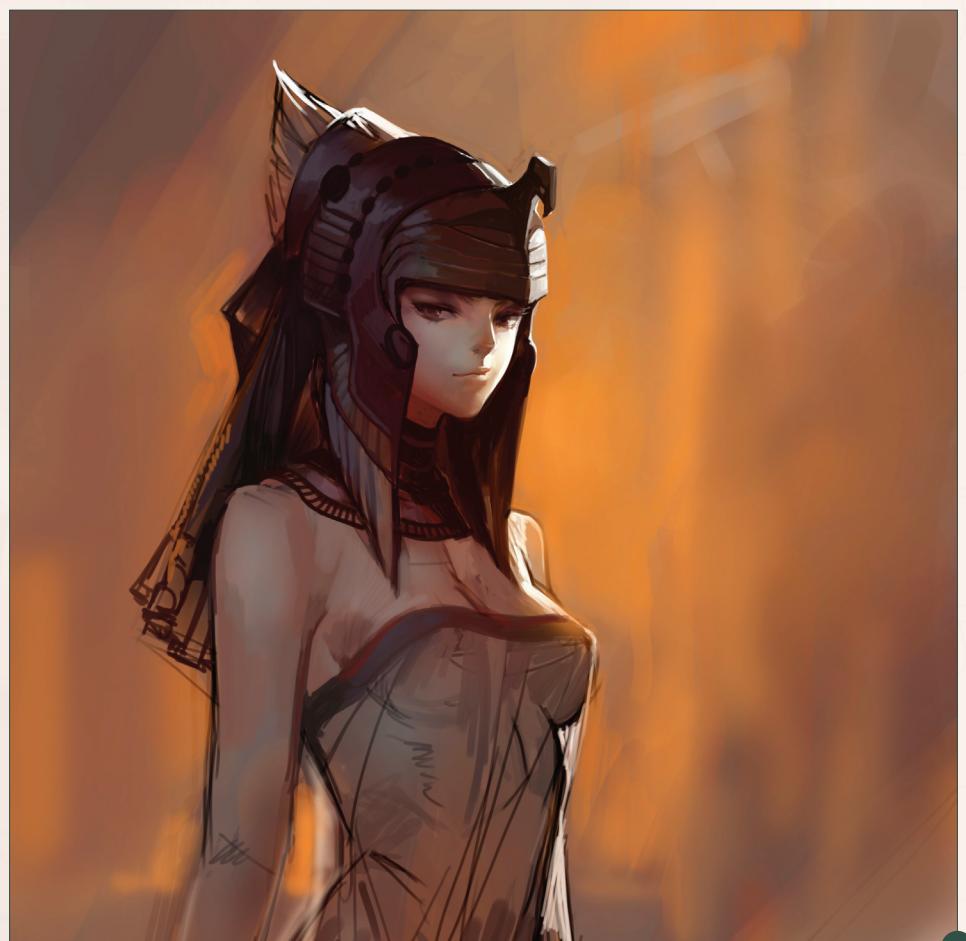
I added a HSV adjustment layer with zero saturation on the top layer. This enabled me to quickly check the tonal value of the image. I was able to quickly hide or unhide the layer to swap between color and grayscale without having to convert the entire canvas to grayscale mode (**Fig.05**).

Refining

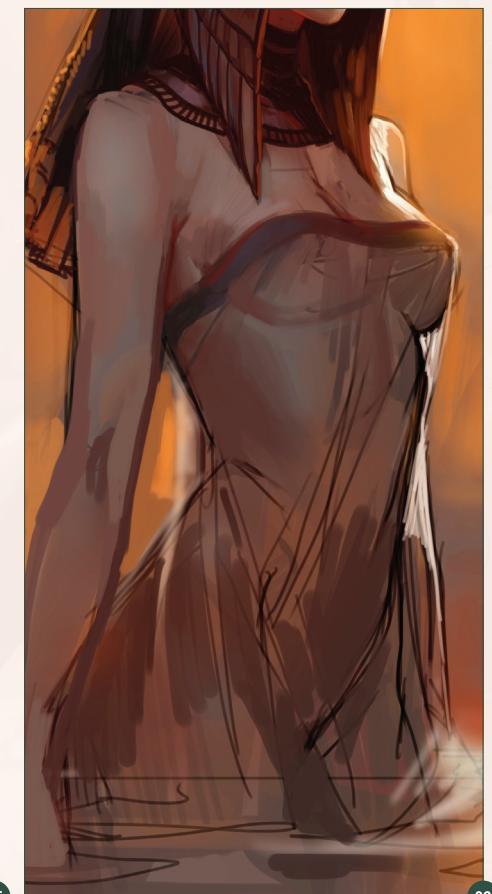
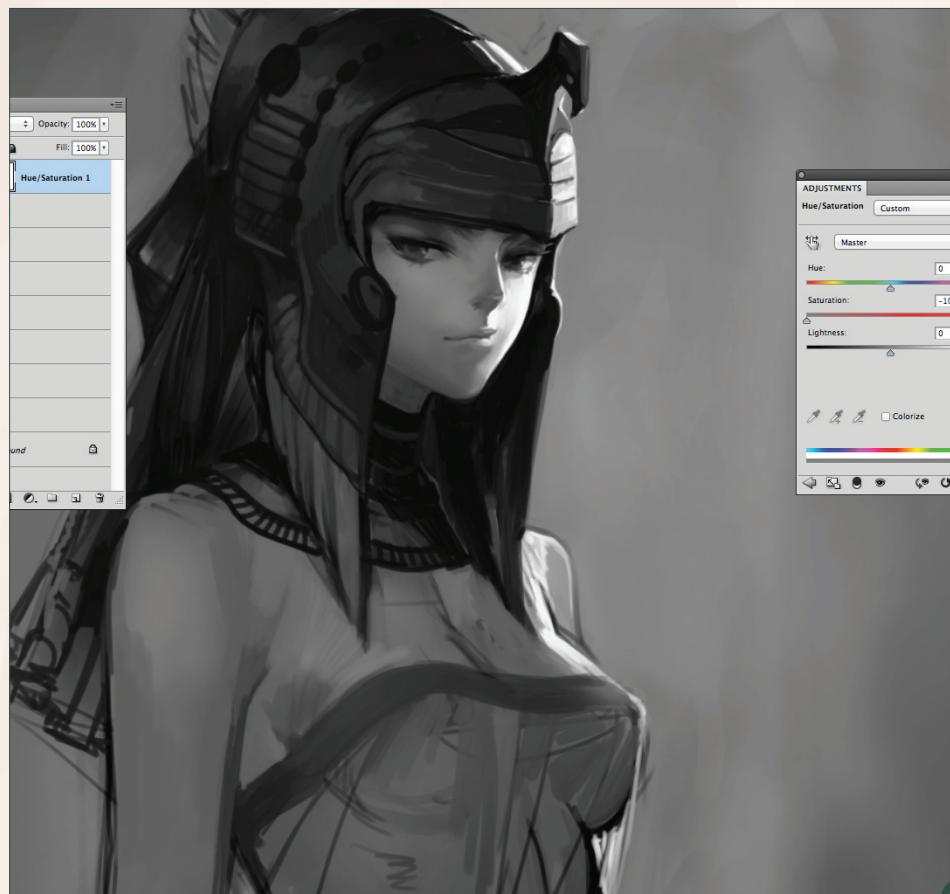
The next step was to paint over Cleopatra's headdress and arm to refine the detail and volume. I also added a complimentary color (grayish blue) to the reflection of the headdress (**Fig.06**). I wanted to make her clothing see-through at first, but I changed my mind at this point and decided to do something a little more conservative.

Changing the Pose

After adding a rough background I just realized that the composition had too much empty

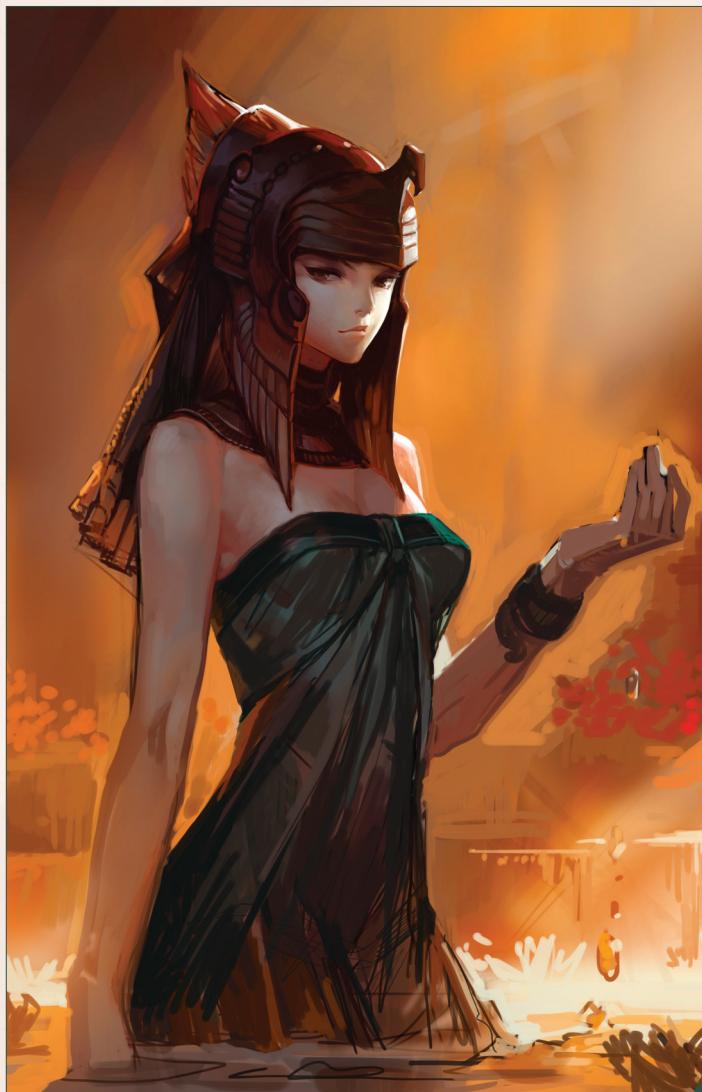


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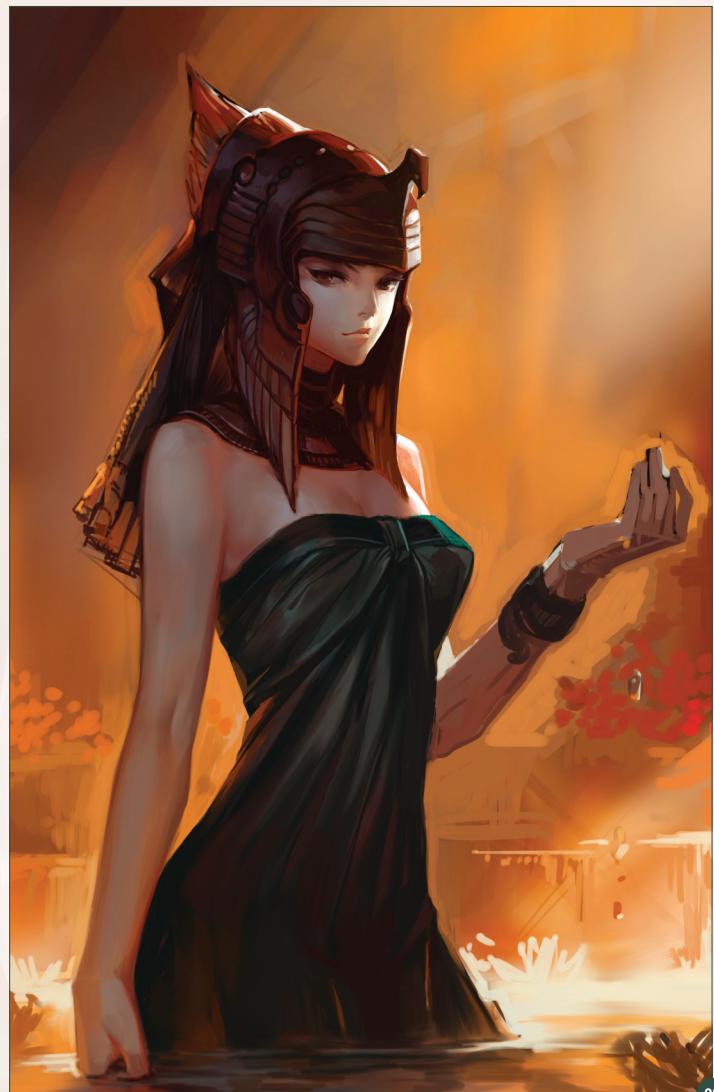


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space, so I decided to change the character's pose to support it (**Fig.07**). To do this I created a new layer, and sketched a left arm and painted it. After doing this I flipped the canvas a few times and noticed some errors in anatomy. To fix these I used the Lasso and Free Transform tools to select, copy, resize and move them into the correct place. This method only works when you are correcting minor errors. If you come across a major error you will need to repaint the incorrect part.

brushes to achieve the same effect in older versions (**Fig.08**).

Enlarging the Canvas

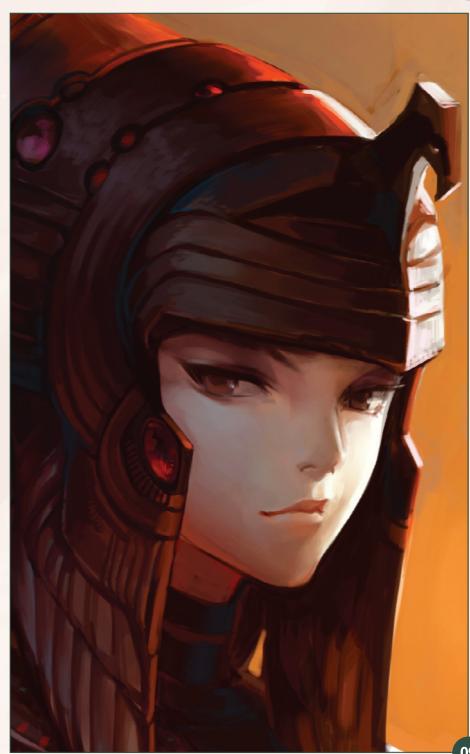
When the overall image became clear I enlarged the canvas to 11 x 15 inches size. The result of this was that the image looked blurry, so I continued to refine the detail even more, especially at the focal points like the face and hands. This method helped to create more contrast between the blurry area and the focal area (**Fig.09**).

Blending with the Mixing Brush

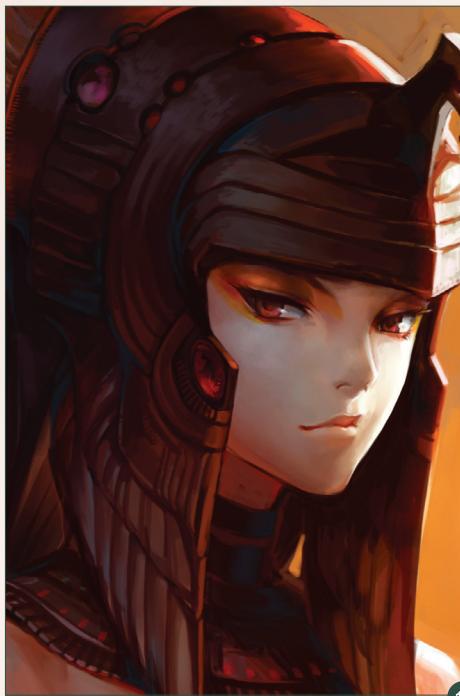
The next step was to use the Mixing Brush tool with the Flat Bristle brush to quickly blend the skin and cloth. I didn't want the brush to feel too smudgy so I set the wetness to around 30-50%. This feature is only available in Photoshop CS5 or higher, but you can combine various

Details

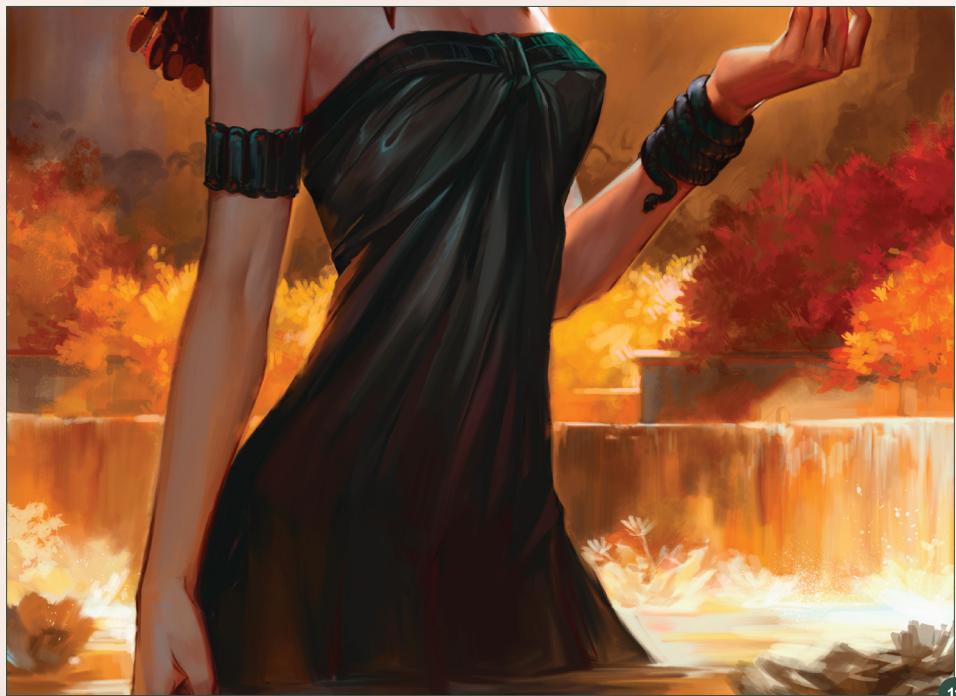
I find it quite a lot of fun to work on the detail. I keep panning around the image and spotting details and refining them. The face is the most time-consuming area for obvious reasons. I added a red/orange gradient to a Multiply layer



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over her face to mimic the look of make-up. Once I had done that I used a fine brush to paint further detail such as eyelashes, eyelids and highlights into a Normal layer. At this point I was happy with the character and could turn my focus to the background (**Fig.10**).

The Background

I used Oil Pastels and a soft airbrush to paint randomly into the background until I created an interesting texture (**Fig.11**). I then added some cracks, edges and glyphs to make it look like there was an Egyptian stone wall in the background. As for the foliage I used a Mixing brush with a small real bristle to quickly paint them. I also added the butterfly to the image to add a mystical feeling (**Fig.12**). At this point it felt like the image was done, so I left it for a while, and planned to look at it again later with fresh eyes. When I did look at it again I was dissatisfied.

Revision

I think the thing that bothered me was that the image lacked a sense of depth. I felt that the fuzzy, unrefined background that I had in an earlier stage looked better. Because of this I had to repaint the wall area again with a soft-edged brush, and add a few lighter tones in the



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background. When I had done this the image finally felt done (**Fig.13**)!

Final Thought

Using an improvised approach is about settling on a direction and going with it. The good thing about this is that you work instinctively, which sometimes causes unexpected results. The downside is that you have to deal with the unexpected problems too. I used to have to scrap a lot of my work because of this.

If you do employ this technique make sure you occasionally save your work, because if

anything goes wrong you can always roll back to a previous version so you don't need to start from a blank canvas again.

Personally I like to clearly plan everything before I actually get started because I don't like facing frustrating problems that waste my time later in the process.

Patipat Asavasena

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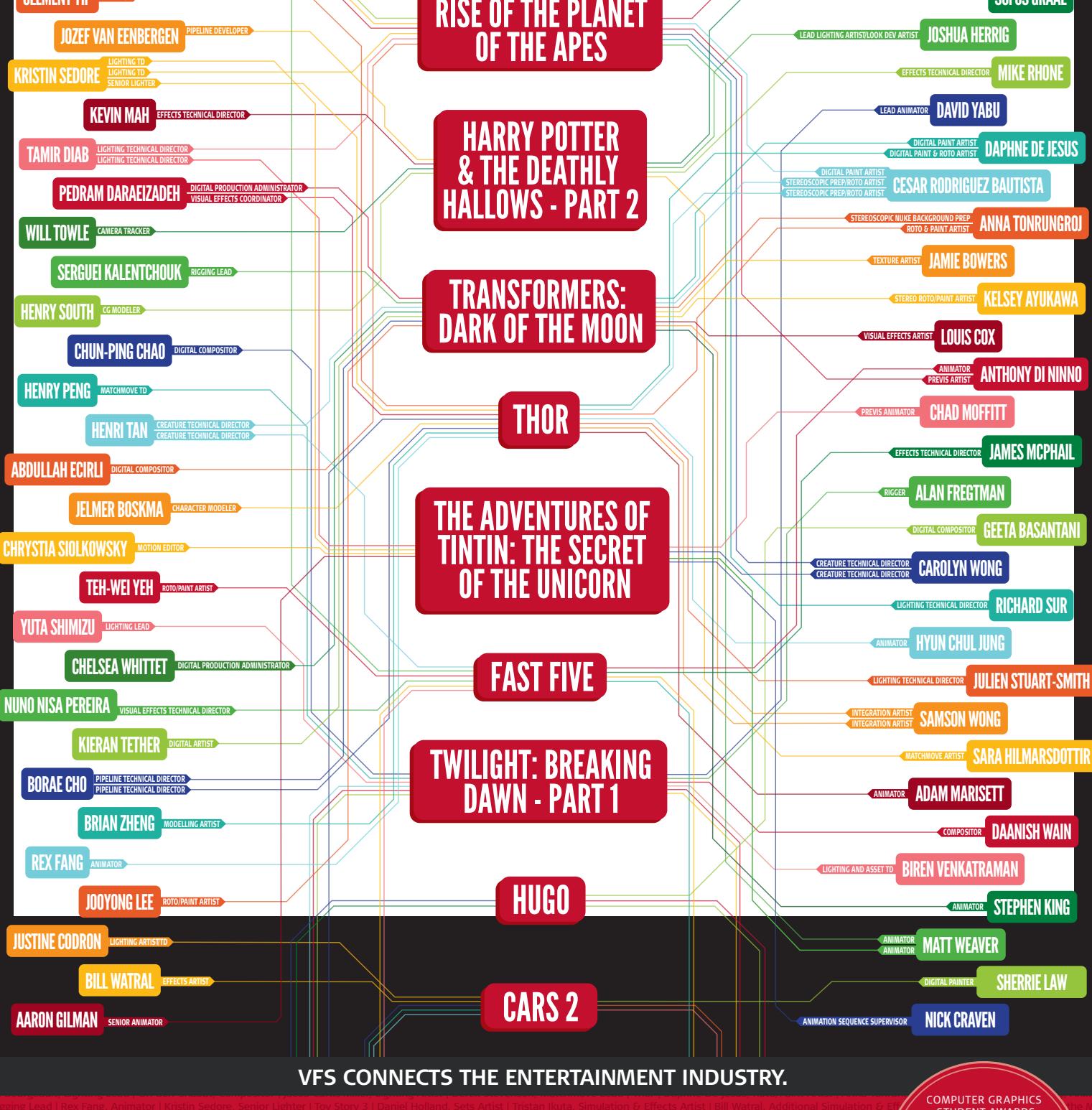
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DREAMSCAPE



CREATING LIVE-ACTION ANIMATIONS, USING 2D PAINTINGS AND COMPOSITING TECHNIQUES

The Dreamscape animation is an amazing project led by regular 2DArtist magazine contributor, Jama Jurabaev. In this tutorial series Jama will be walking us through the processes that he and his team used to create this mind-blowing short. From concepts and storyboards through to live-action compositing, no rock is left unturned as Jama explains how you too can use some simple tricks and methods to create professional quality, live-action animations without needing a professional budget.

To see the Dreamscape animation in full, check out Issue 075 of 2DArtist magazine which features Part 1 of this series.



Compositing

Software Used: After Effects

Introduction

This is the final chapter of this animation series. In the previous three chapters I've covered such topics as concept art, matte painting, animation and 3D. Now it is time to bring everything together and finalize our short animated movie. As a main tool for compositing we used Adobe After Effects, but the same results can be achieved with other compositing software such as Nuke, Fusion, etc.



After Effects

The reason why I used Adobe After Effects is that it has a lot of similarities to Adobe Photoshop, especially in terms of the layering system. Also there are lots of great plugins available for After Effects.

Compositing

Basically, compositing is a seamless merging of different animated layers such as live action, 3D and other special effects. There are several things that you have to keep in mind in order to merge them properly and make the final shot more realistic.

In general, live footage has some features that you have to reflect in your CG elements, such as:

- **Motion blur:** There are several different ways to create motion blur, but for this animated movie I had to use the cheapest and most effective method. So I used

RE:Vision Effects's ReelSmart Motion Blur plugin. This is a pixel-based motion blur and creates a motion blur relative to pixel motion in consecutive frames.

- **Depth of field:** For depth of field we used a standard Lens Blur in Adobe After Effects.
- **Grain:** To match the overall grain we used a Grain filter in Adobe After Effects.
- **Color correction:** Finally each shot was color corrected using color correction tools in After Effects.

There is also another great After Effects plugin that we used to simulate slow motion effects. Unfortunately due to our low budget we couldn't afford a camera with high FPS rate. RE:Vision's Twixtor plugin helped us a lot to fake slow motion effects. Of course, both the ReelSmart Motion Blur and Twixtor plugins are not perfect. They create a lot of artifacts and problems, but you can achieve relatively good results by using them.





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Scene Breakdowns – Over the Ice

At the beginning of our animated short we had a camera flying over the ice. In order to compose the real snow (Fig.01) with a CG background (Fig.02), we overlaid the snow footage in Screen mode on top of the CG layer. Then ReelSmart Motion Blur helped us to match the motion blur of the snow footage and the CG (Fig.03).

Factory

For the lens effects in the factory, we used a great Optical Flares plugin from www.videocopilot.net (Fig.04).

The live footage (Fig.05) was layered on the CG factory scene (Fig.06) and the final shot was color corrected to bring it all together (Fig.07).

Shuttle

In the shuttle scene, to cut out our main characters we used a standard key light filter in After Effects. All the shuttle panels were animated using basic animation tools in After Effects (Fig.08 – 11).

Conclusion

Not everything went smoothly or easily, but taking into account the fact that for me and my teammates this project was the first serious animation project we had worked on, I was very happy with the final result.

Projects like this motivate me to move forward, explore and create new things. Once again I want to thank the 3DTotal team for giving me the opportunity to share this project and many

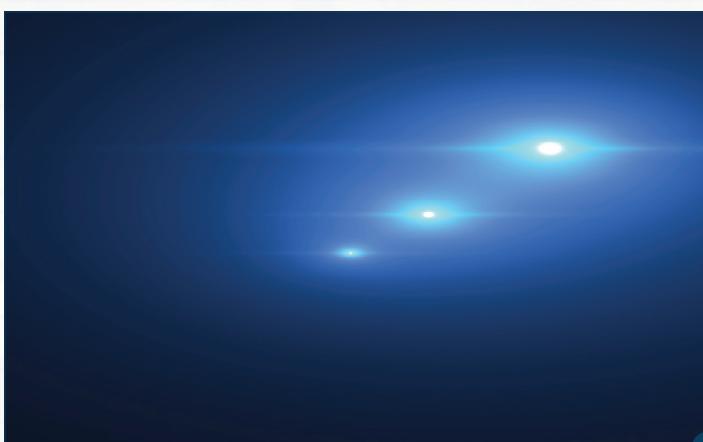
thanks also to all my workmates who helped me out a lot.

Credits

Jama Jurabaev: Concept art and matte painting
Dmitriy Ten: 3D and camera projection
Iskandar Mirzoganiev: Set designs
Ulugbek Khalilov: Photography
Azam Khasanov: Music
Sadikjan Tairov: 3D

Jama Jurabaev

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DESIGNING DROIDS



Digital art has its place in many industries, but none of these rely on it as much as the games industry! Obviously games are made of many elements, but you could argue that the most important element of any game is the characters. In this tutorial series our artists will be showing us how to design droids as if they were doing it within the games industry. This will involve them coming up with the design and showing you how to develop it to the point where they will even show you how to create the technical drawings for a 3D modeler!

DEMOLITION DROID

Designing Droids

Chapter 5: Demolition Droid

Chapter 5: Demolition Droid

Software Used: Photoshop

I thoroughly enjoyed working on this tutorial and was pleased with how it turned out! I'd like to show my overall working method for completing these pieces in Photoshop, as well as communicate a little of my thought/design process.

Since the main purpose of a demolition droid is to destroy things – hopefully in a planned and organized way – I started out creating a few thumbnails that demonstrate this objective (Fig.01). I wanted it to read as a droid and not as a mech or battle-suit.

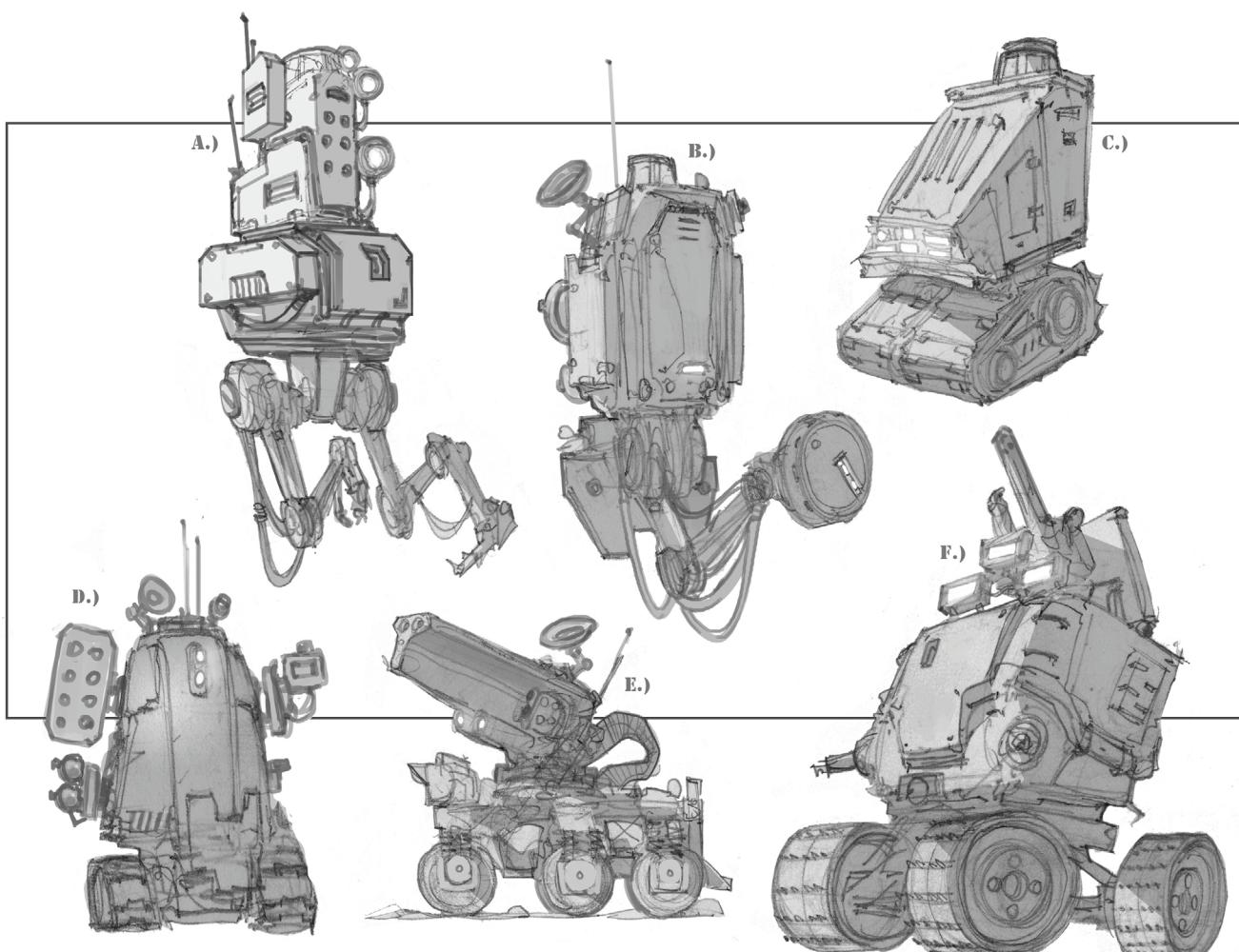
First off, it would need to be durable, small and somewhat stealthy – maybe able to fly/hover (A,

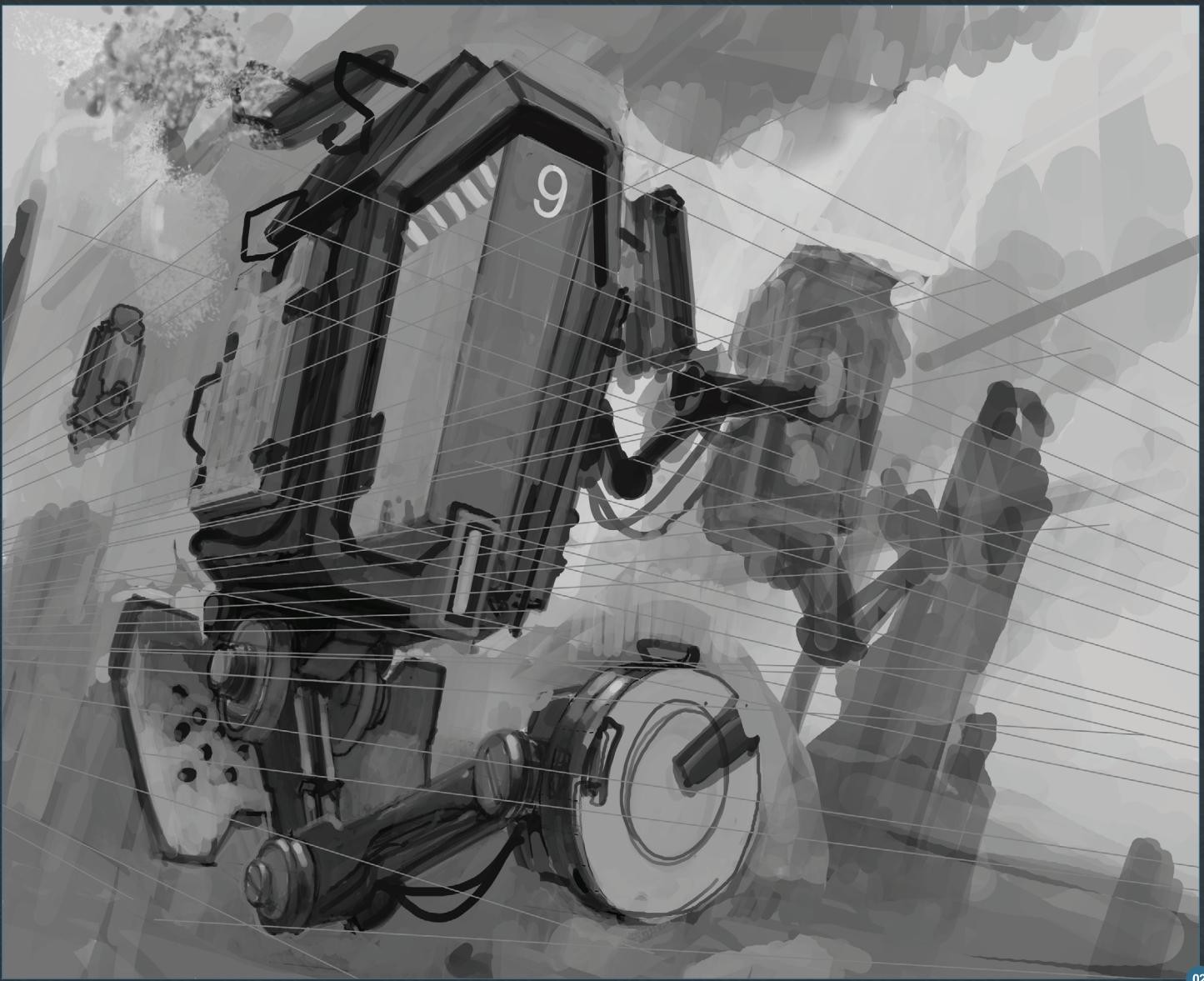
B), or maybe built to roll over all types of terrain (E). Perhaps the droid is equipped with tank treads or multiple sets of wheels (C, D, and F)?

In the end, a design that hovered was chosen, as the droid could go anywhere and wasn't limited by height, terrain or blockades. The design needed to be durable enough to take a few hits and still function, so thumbnail B seemed the most suitable. The main body would be a sturdy case, which held small explosives operated by a small arm. This arm could place the explosives strategically, to maximize the bomb's potential to destroy a structure or vehicle. To aid in the placement of these explosives, a cutting torch was added, to slice through metal bulkheads and doors. Lastly, missile launchers were added, so the droid could defend itself or remove obstacles.

Next, I started planning my illustration. I wanted to show the droid at its most exciting – a squad of these units, powering forward, arms carrying explosives ready to be planted, missile launchers firing (indicating there are enemy units ahead of them). I felt this model of droid would be particularly effective as a squad, hitting multiple targets at once and striking quickly before the enemy can regain ground.

I started drawing out some quick compositions based on this squad mentality, until I arrived at the one I was happiest with. From there I created a rough drawing of the scene and blocked in my basic shapes. I created an extremely rough proxy model of the piece in Google SketchUp, just to get some rough perspective lines in there, as well as a 3D feel. I tilted the droid to give it some force and





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some dramatic appeal. Then I added in a few more rough perspective lines to help me do an accurate under-drawing (**Fig.02**).

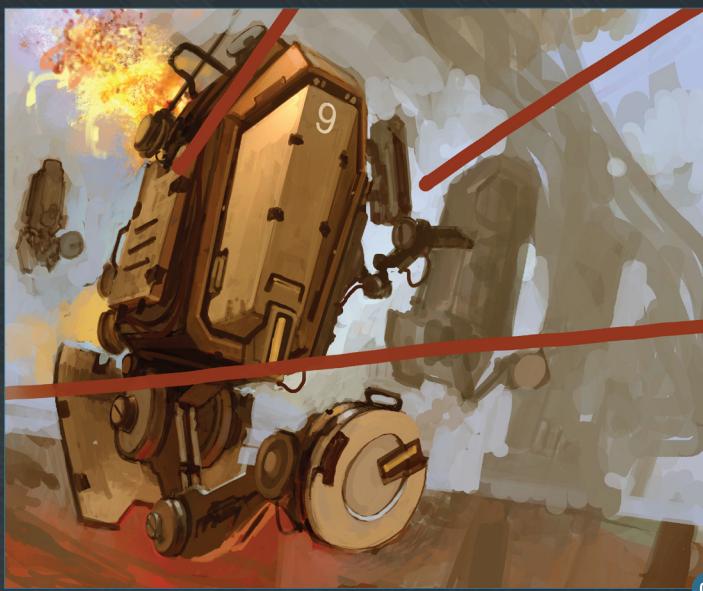
I will frequently flip an image and keep an eye on my Navigator window, to be sure the piece reads when it's small. I started to indicate my lighting and values now that I was somewhat satisfied with the overall design. I want the front droid to be dark against a background of fog and explosions (**Fig.03**).

Next, I concentrated on picking out a color palette. I wanted the piece to be mostly warm, indicating explosions and fire around the squad of droids, but with the smoke from the burning targets bringing in some cooler hues. To add



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Designing Droids Chapter 5: Demolition Droid



more action and depth, I would eventually want some enemy fire crossing over and behind the main droid (**Fig.04**).

Here, I refined the design/color/lighting. I will usually do both drawing and blocking in shape silhouettes at this point. I looked at many military references for color, and decided this would take

place out in some oil fields of a desert or plain. The main body would be a brown/tan color, so that it blends in with this particular environment (**Fig.05**).

I toned down the saturation of the entire painting a bit, because I felt that the color was getting too bright and vivid for a war scene (**Fig.06**).

Here I continued to tighten up the piece, defining my edges on the main droid and indicating the other robots and structures in the background. I wanted the ground to be on fire for a very warzone-like feel, which would allow me to add some light from beneath, to make the droids stand out from the background. I also fixed a few perspective issues as I saw them (**Fig.07**).



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A friend suggested that the droid needed some small details that made it really stand out and gave it character – warning signs, ID numbers, logos, etc. I came up with a logo for a fictional

military, as well as caution symbols and danger signs around the engines. For some scale reference, I added in some handlebars on a few of the panels. Extra scratches, grime, texture

overlays, dirt around the edges and some blast marks were also added to push the battle-worn appearance (**Fig.08**).

Designing Droids Chapter 5: Demolition Droid

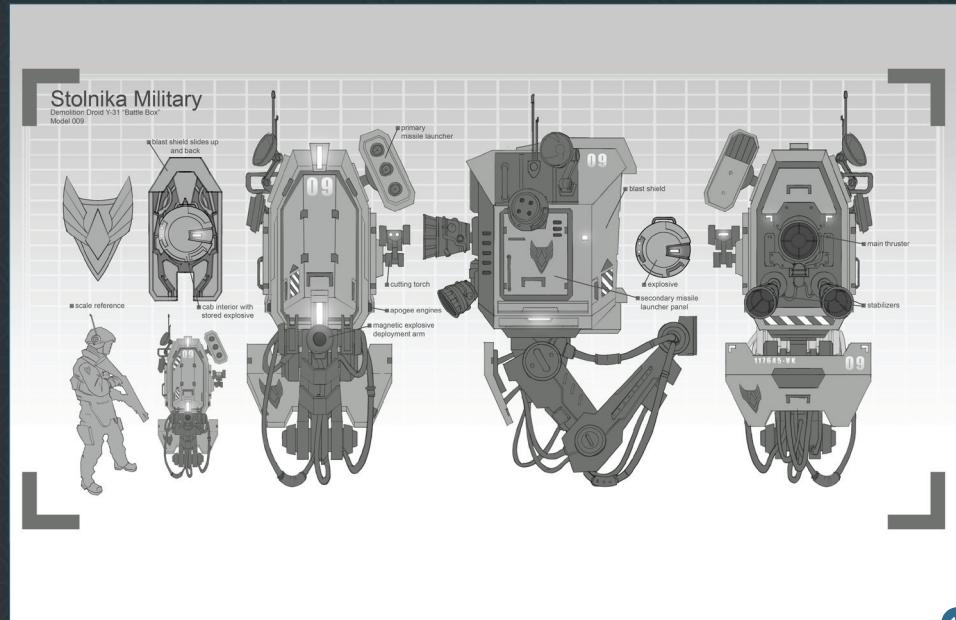
A few lighting tweaks and it was done! I cleaned up some of the edges on the main droid, added detail and texture, and brought the enemy fire beams back into the piece (**Fig.09**).

Usually I do the turnaround sheet while I am still working on the illustration, to be sure the design is right and is exciting from all angles, not just the one I've chosen to illustrate (**Fig.10**). I felt like the piece was done and accurately illustrated the basic idea of what a demolition droid does – blows stuff up! Thanks for reading!

Justin Albers

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Andrew Baker
3D Character & Concept Artist

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BEASTS DROIDS & HUMANS

This month's interview comes from the master of beasts design **Andrew Baker**, **Jack Zhang** builds us a fighter droid and **Anto Juricic** and **Rodrigue Pralier** tackle the unwrapping stage of our **Character Production** series.

Cover image by Andrew Baker

Armored Cat
Christopher Brändström brings us the final installment of our **Armored Beasts** series by showing us how he created his excellent Armored Cat.

Guide to FX - Particles & Dynamics
Goodness gracious great tutorials on fire! This issue **Matt Chandler** (3dsmax) and **Mike Zugschwert** (Maya) show us how to create and animate fire.

Fighter Droid
Jack Zhang turns a 2D concept into a lean mean fighting machine with the construction of a Fighter Droid for our **Building Droids** series.

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PAINTING CREATURES FROM MYTHOLOGY



Myths, legends and fantasy creatures have always been influential when it comes to digital art. In fact, many artists will never really stray too far from these sorts of themes and ideas. In this series a selection of stunning artists will be taking this popular subject and exploring some of its more diverse and lesser known characters. Throughout the series each artist will be given a brief for a character which they will need to interpret and turn into an illustration. To make things a little more interesting this will be done by not one but two artists, one using Photoshop and the other using Painter. This will not only show some of the differences between the two pieces of software, but will also show how the same brief can be interpreted in two different ways. This month **Ignacio Bazan Lazcano** and **Simon Dominic Brewer** tackle the **Cipactli**.



Chapter 6: Cipactli

Software Used: Photoshop

The Idea

From the beginning, the idea of creating a mythological monster interested me. The only instruction I had was that I couldn't see a reference image.

In Aztec mythology, Cipactli is a creature that is part fish and part crocodile, with several mouth. A monster with a voracious hunger, it inhabits forests and marshy places.

I was ill in bed for three weeks, so I had plenty of time to think about this brief as I was able to do little else! Nevertheless, this unusual situation served me well.

During my "spare time", while watching a documentary about wild animals on TV, I got a wonderful idea. I thought; why not draw the creature as if it were really alive? Why not pretend that I am a nature photographer, who accidentally discovers this being in the wild forest?

The idea was to try drawing this picture as if it were a photo I had taken while hiding, so that the beast wouldn't be able to see me. To achieve a realistic effect in the picture, I had to do some research online, looking for pictures of animals in the jungle/forest, in order to get the right colors to use for the creatures' surroundings and environment, as well as an appropriate atmosphere.

Approach

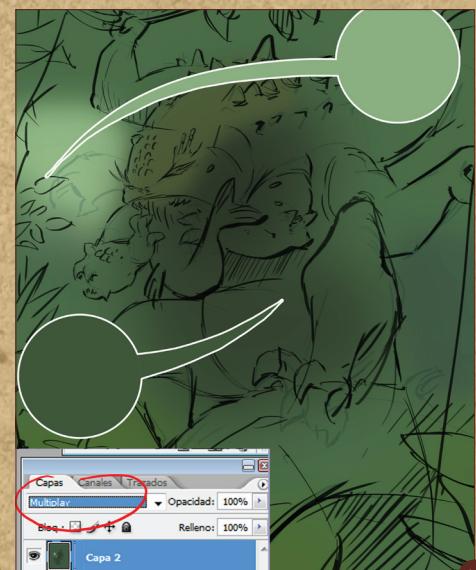
This time, I will try to show you how to achieve a realistic effect in a drawing, by using textures. As you have already seen in previous tutorials, the texture of most of my digital paintings is similar to that of oil paintings; they are more pictorial and less realistic. This time I will focus more on textures and less on color.

Many times I have seen some artist's work, where they have inserted photographs together with their drawings, trying to give some realism to the final finish. Usually these drawings don't look good – they look sloppy, and more like a badly retouched photo than a super realistic drawing.

The problem is how to integrate both drawings and photographs and when to use textures. Textures are used when:



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- We need to achieve something realistic
- For fast visualization, look and feel
- To give more detail to parts of a drawing
- As inspiration. Many times photos suggest form or assist in composition.

The problem with using photographs is when we abuse them. Textures are there to help enhance an artist's image and creativity, and shouldn't be relied upon to get a good picture.

Photos and Color

The first thing I do is to work on the line drawing. I make several sketches of the creature and finally I keep the improved one (**Fig.01**).

The second step is color. I usually define the floor's base color, starting with the drawing's idea. As Cipactli is going to be in the jungle, the base color will be green (**Fig.02**).

To choose final colors for my drawing, I use several photos that belong to my personal collection. One of the great advantages of digital painting is that we can take the color palette from another image, without having to form it (Fig.03).

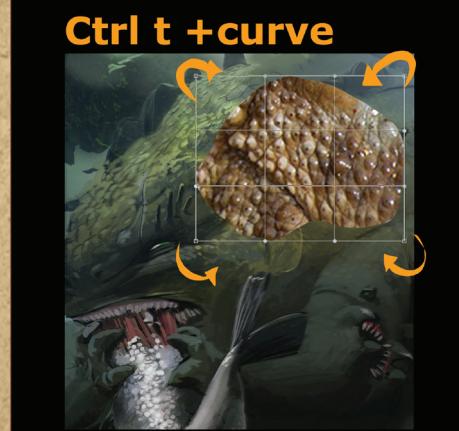
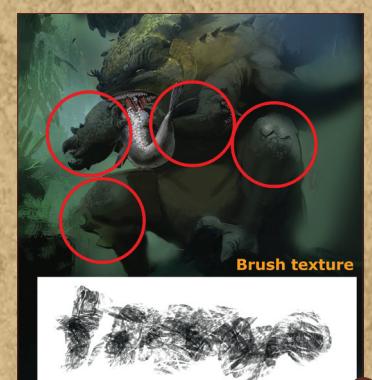
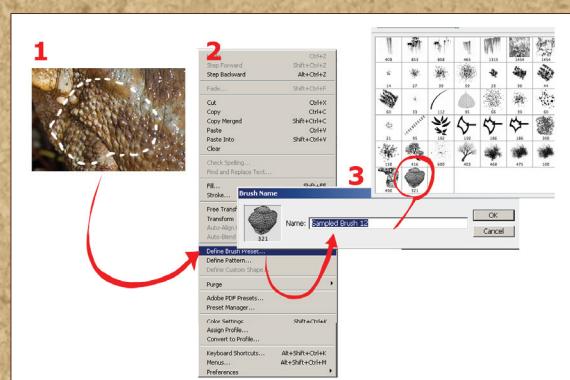
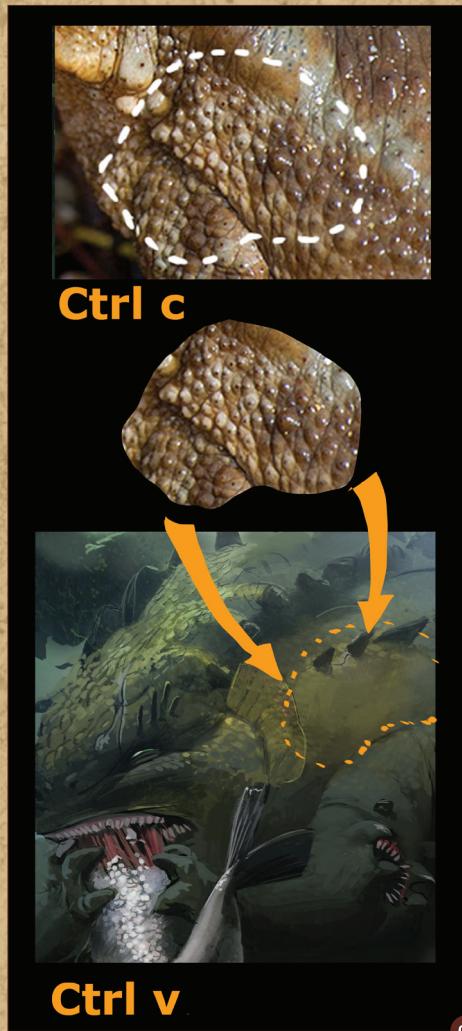
With this method of application, color can achieve a realistic atmosphere even before the texture is applied (Fig.04).

Type of Textures

Once I have defined the drawing palette and have all the elements well-lit, I can move on to the texturing stage.

We can add texture or detail to a drawing in the following different ways:

- Creating brushes
- Using pictures
- Painting repeated shapes



Creating Brushes
We can create brushes from photos, and use those brushes to produce realistic textures and details. This technique is very easy; we just need a good photo, and a clear area of it. What I've done for my image is to find a photo of a lizard and select the scales with a magic wand. Then I've created a new brush and finally edited it using F5 (Fig.05).

With this new brush, I can quickly detail key parts of my drawing (Fig.06).

This method is very similar to the one I use to create a brush; the difference is that I cut out this texture and paste it directly onto the drawing (Fig.07).

To adapt texture to the picture we can use several tools:

Ctrl + T + Curve: Used to change the image size and make the texture match the form of the target area (Fig.08).

Ctrl + L: Used to control light or darkness levels of the picture, it will help us to combine the texture contrast with our drawing (Fig.09).

Ctrl + B: Allows you to match texture color with that of your drawing (Fig.10).

Whenever we use this method we will then use a brush and the Eraser tool to match the texture with the drawing (Fig.11).

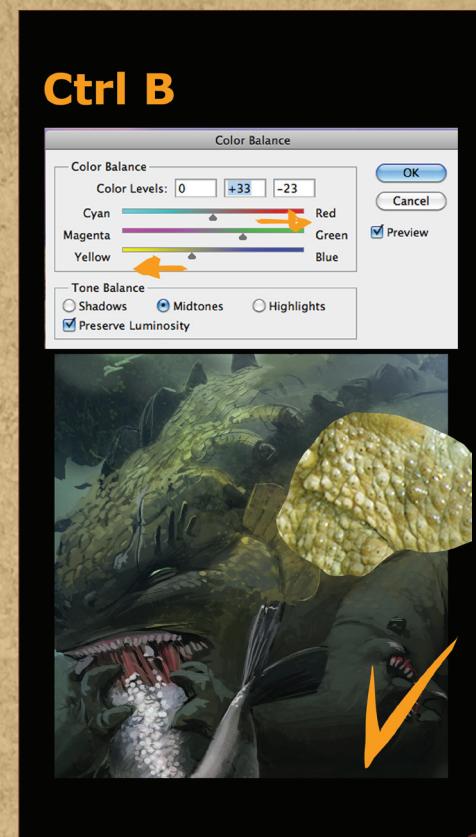
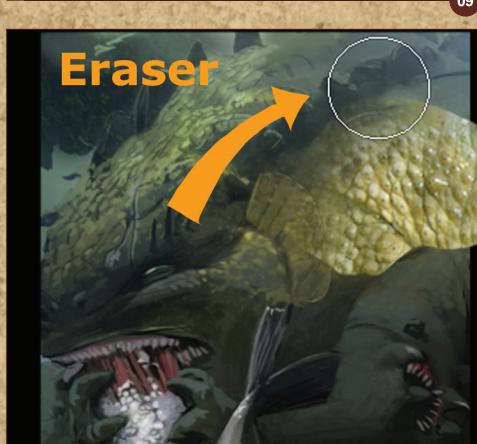
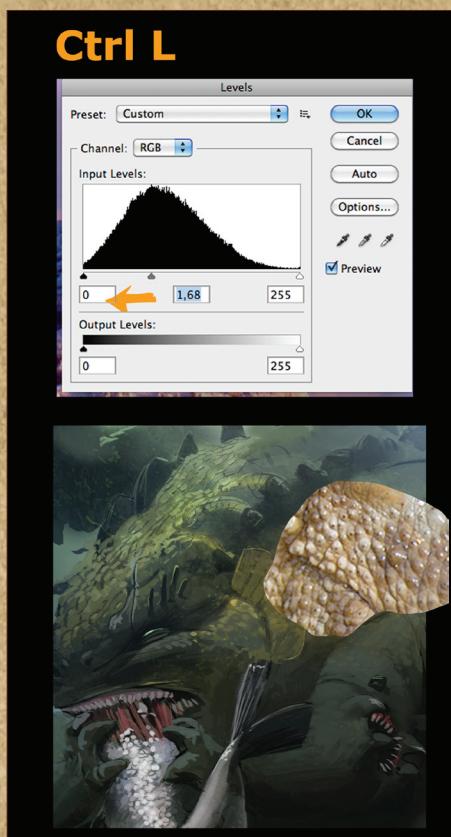
Using any brush from our brushes portfolio, we can generate textures through repetition. This is hand-made repeated spots or stripes, or attractive shapes. In this case I'm not using any specific tool from Photoshop, just my own hand movement (Fig.12).

Plants

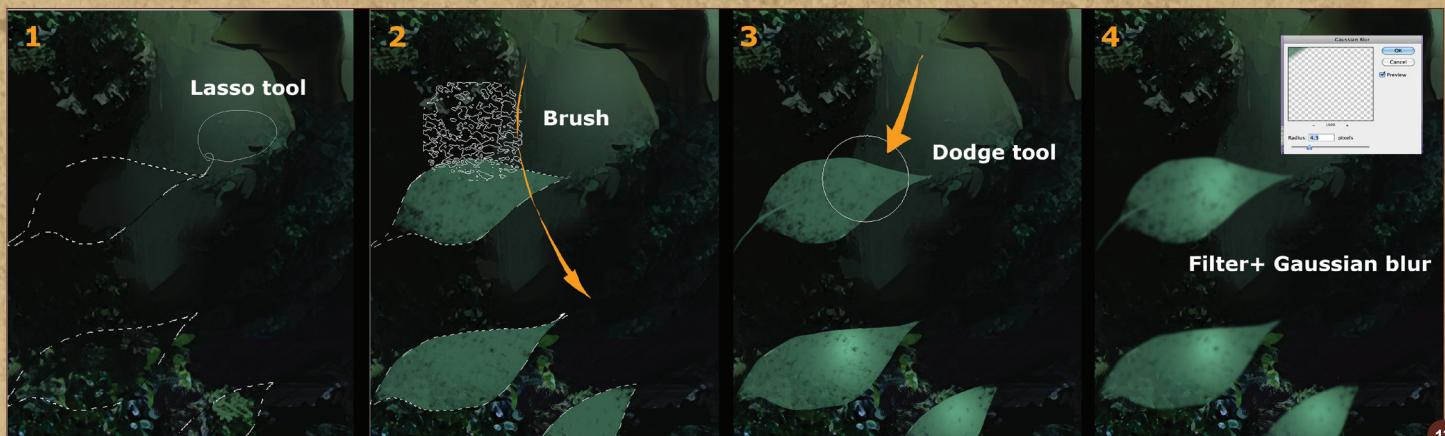
To obtain an even more realistic environment, I place objects out of focus in the foreground. This makes it look more like a photograph.

I create the leaves in my drawing by using the Lasso tool. I first make a new layer and then, using the Lasso tool, draw the shape of a leaf. With this area still selected, I take a different brush that has some interesting texture and I paint inside this selection. The result is a perfect leaf.

Finally, on this layer, I use the Blur filter, which puts the leaf out of focus in relation to the background image, thus generating much more distance and depth in the image (Fig.13).



repeat the same shape



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Water

I draw a pair of vertical stripes in a blue-gray color on a new layer, and then use the Motion Blur filter, to get an effect that will result in a beautiful and realistic waterfall. Then all that's left is to give it final details with the brush (Fig.14).

Conclusions

Digital painting today allows us to work quickly and in an economical way. We can achieve high levels of realism in a short period of time. It can also allow us to adapt to any editorial or visual format and make changes almost in real time. However, it is necessary to know how to use

these tools with judgment and not abuse them. We must also understand and take advantage of new technologies, without relying on them.

Ignacio Bazan Lazcano

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Email: i.bazanlazcano@gmail.com



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Chapter 6: Cipactli

Software Used: Painter

The Idea

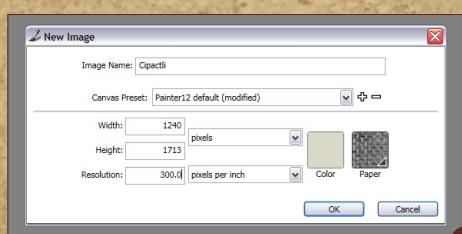
In Aztec mythology, Cipactli was a sea monster with a prodigious appetite, so much so that it boasted numerous extra mouths, which yawned from various joints on its body.

Physically Cipactli was a patchwork of different creatures and was said to resemble a fusion of crocodile, fish and toad.

For this tutorial I'm going to use this description to depict the hideous Cipactli, and demonstrate



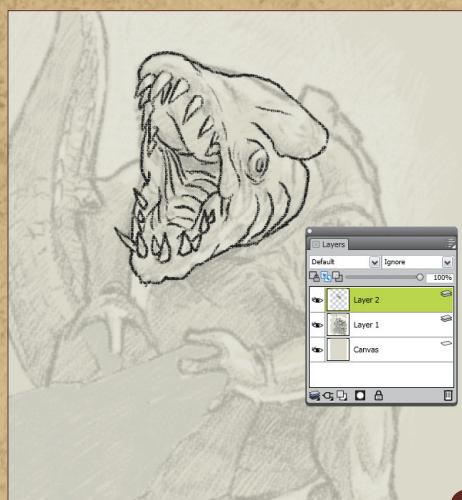
01



how a convincing creature can be created from even the most outlandish description. I will be using Painter 12.

Concept Sketches

First I sketch out some ideas. As the description doesn't specify which parts of Cipactli correspond to which animal, it's up to me to choose. I experiment with him having the head of a toad, the torso of a fish (do fishes have torsos?) and the body of a crocodile, but the one I like best has a vicious fish's head, the forequarters of a toad and the hindquarters of a crocodile (Fig.01).



Create the Canvas

Next I create my main image canvas. I start small, only half the size of my specification, because at this stage I'll only be fleshing out the concept and not laying down any detail (Fig.02).

Using the Concept as a Guide

I paste my concept sketch as a layer, reduce the opacity and use it as a guide. This doesn't mean I have to strictly adhere to the original lines, but it does provide a timesaving method of replicating the basic shapes. Above this layer I create another layer, onto which I draw the sketch (Fig.03).

The brush I use is a simple circular brush set to Grainy Soft Cover, with pressure-dependant opacity. This helps to give a good grainy pencil effect. I set the color to solid black (0:0:0)

The Sketch

During the course of sketching, I decide that Cipactli should have six legs rather than four; after all, the specification doesn't actually say how many limbs he should possess (and I'd guess that nobody really knew in the first place).

Painting Creatures From Mythology

Chapter 6: Cipactli



04

So I add the full body of a crocodile and join it in a Frankenstein-style to the toad's torso.

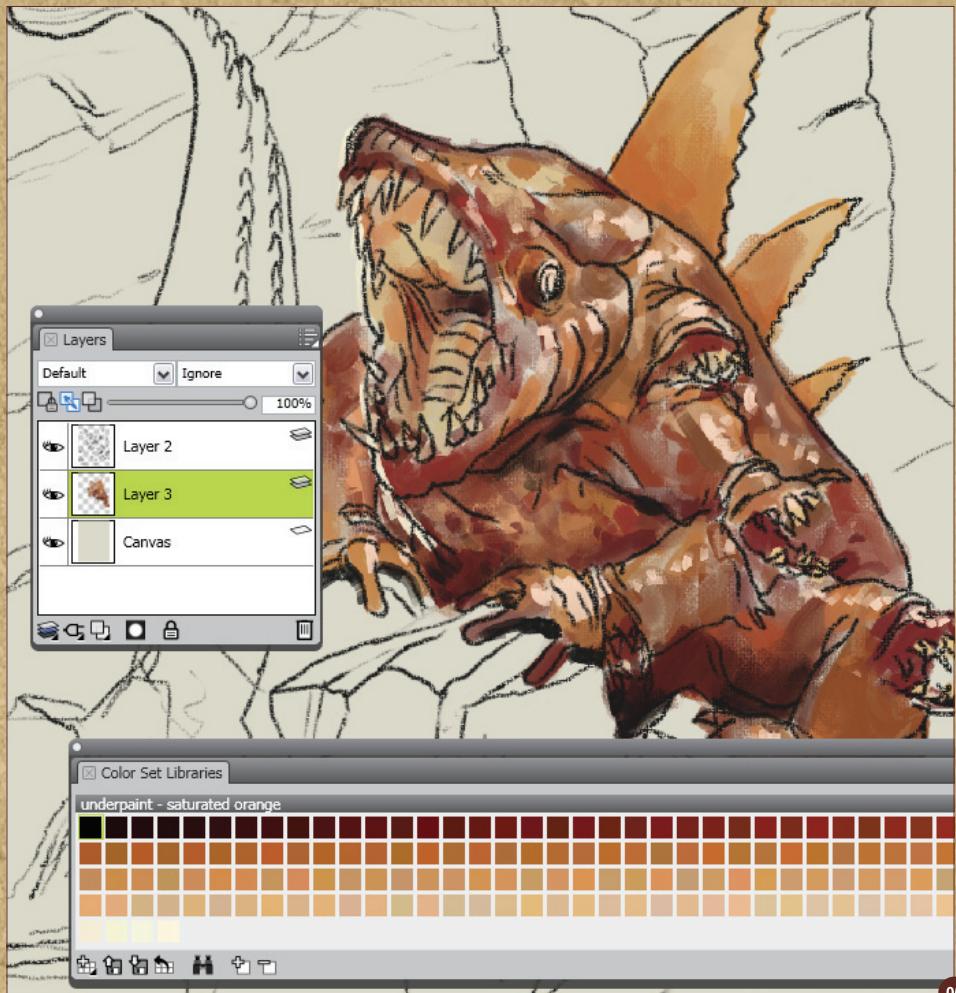
I keep the environment simple yet representative of Cipactli being a sea-monster (in other words: cliffs, rocks, sand and water). When I've finished the sketch I remove the concept guide layer so that I'm left with the canvas and the sketch layer (**Fig.04**).

Underpainting

I create a third layer between the canvas and the sketch layer. This is for the underpainting. I use the term "underpainting" to signify a value study, which is an image that concentrates on the lights and darks rather than hue or saturation. In this case, for my underpainting, I'm working with a palette of oranges and reds. This has the effect of warming the image when the final color is applied, making it appear more vibrant.

Picking colors directly from the Color Set Libraries panel, I do my underpainting on the recently created layer. I use a large Artists Oils brush with pressure-dependant opacity and 50% Grain, not paying much attention to detail and instead focusing on getting my lights and darks looking right.

In terms of lighting I'm going to have a diffused light source top right (the sun) and a very bright, but localized, light coming from the



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left-hand side of the canvas. I don't know what this secondary bright light source might be; it really doesn't matter, as it's just a technique for providing some rim lighting in the otherwise shadowed areas of foreground objects, in order to get them to stand out (**Fig.05**).

Demonstrating Depth

I paint the background in higher value (lighter) tones than the foreground, to give the impression of distance. Whatever we do, we don't want the creature to be lost in the background.

Next I reduce the opacity of the top level sketch layer to around 50% and drop all layers to the canvas. With a couple of brief exceptions, I'll be painting directly to the canvas for the rest of the tutorial (**Fig.06**).

Mixing the Colors

To create a color palette, I use the Mixer panel and mix some warm yellows, pinks and oranges,



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with a smattering of higher saturation reds. Then I use the Create Color Set from Mixer command, which creates a Color Set panel based on the Mixer contents. Normally this results in more



colors than you need, so I right-click on the ones I don't need and delete them. There's nothing to stop you working directly from the Mixer, or even using the Color Wheel or Temporal Color palette to choose colors – it's all down to preference (Fig.07).

Resize Up

It's time to resample my image to working size. I use Canvas > Resize to set the pixel dimensions to 3040 x 4200 pixels. This is larger than the specified final size of 2780 x 3425, but I normally work larger in order to paint the fine details more easily, then resize down at the end. The key points to remember when resizing are to keep the aspect ratio the same (e.g., 400 x 500 may become 800 x 1000) and never resize upwards after you've added detail, or you'll need to do it all again.

When I work on the detail, I often have no preferred plan of attack in regards to which bits



to do first. Sometimes I'll start with the image focus, sometimes the sky, and sometimes – like now – I'll zip here and there on the canvas almost at random and tackle whatever comes to mind. It's really up to you, as the artist, to do what suits you best.

For detail work I use my Artists Oils brush again, occasionally with some subtle blending, applied with another Artists Oils brush that has an Amount setting of 0%, so it doesn't lay down any paint. For very fine detail I'll work with a circular brush, very similar to the Pencil brush, except with some degree of blending to avoid hard edges (Fig.08).

Odd Anatomy

Most creatures tend to have their mouths confined to their heads, so trying to find reference for mouths in any other location, is an



exercise in futility. The main thing I want to avoid is making the mouths appear flat, as they could do if I just paint a mouth shape onto a shoulder or an elbow. I imagine that each mouth is actually attached to a head, portraying the skin around the mouth being drawn back to display the gums and teeth, and the central portion receding as if into a throat. Lighting plays an important part in ensuring elements in a painting look solid and in this piece I make sure the light direction conforms to my primary light source. I also add small, bright specula highlights to simulate moisture (Fig.09).

Skin

When painting monster skin, it's good to get some texture in there – grooves, blotches, creases and bumps are all part of a good beast complexion. I vary the color often by picking new colors from the Color Set palette, or from the canvas itself. At every stage I bear in mind the location of my light sources, so that I'm not presented with any inconsistencies later in the process. Here I add some specula highlights to the fish eye that's protruding from Cipactli's head (Fig.10).

Using References

Don't be afraid of using references. When done right they are an invaluable aid to the drawing and painting process. In this instance I search

Painting Creatures From Mythology

Chapter 6: Cipactli

out a selection of images from Google showing fish, toads and coastal environments. I choose four images to work from and have these lurking around my Painter workspace, so I can call them up when needed (**Fig.11**).

It's important to remember not to slavishly copy the references and instead to focus on the essence of the imaged. For example, I reference the mottled, slightly wrinkled skin texture from the photograph of a toad for my creature's belly, whilst maintaining the key features of my own creature – stance, position, lighting and coloration.

Keeping track of your lighting is also essential when referencing. As your reference is unlikely to be lit in the same manner as the elements in your image, you need to adjust this as you paint. If you fail to do this the element will stand out in all the wrong ways.

Cipactli's Eye

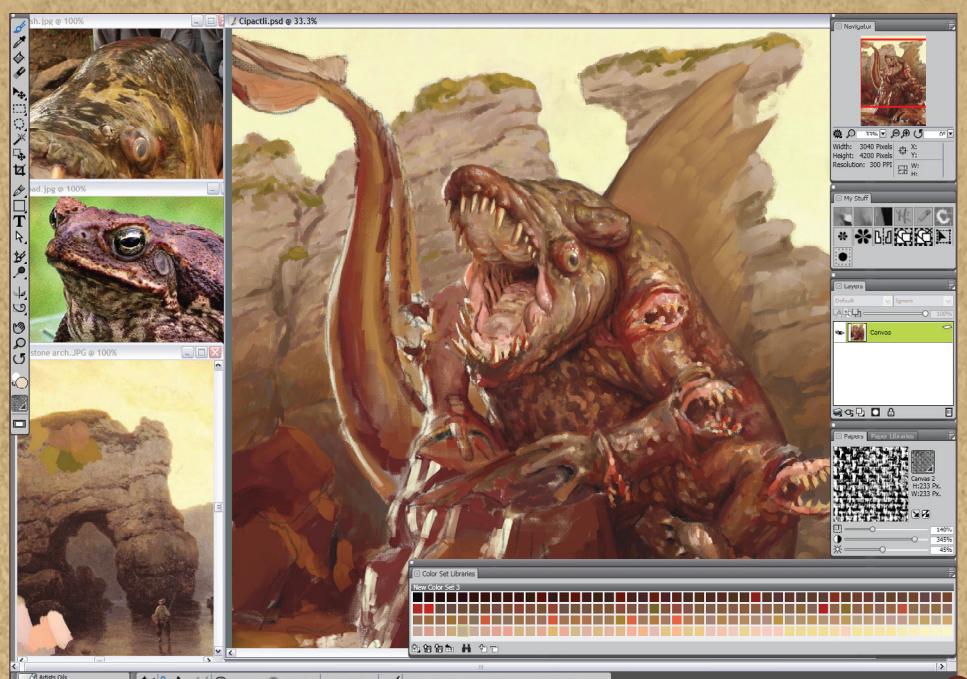
I've already decided to give my creature a fish eye, referenced in part from a photo of a seriously vicious fish, but now I want to make Cipactli's eye appear slightly translucent. To achieve this, I add some higher contrast color to the side opposite the one that our light source strikes directly. This gives an effect called sub-surface scattering, in which the light passes through the skin or flesh and emerges on the other side.

A good way to see how this works is to put your hand over a torch in the dark and see how the edges of your fingers glow a saturated red color, as the light from the torch permeates your skin.

In addition I add some specular highlights where the light source strikes the top of the eye and surrounding skin. This gives the impression of fishy wetness (**Fig.12**).

Selective Smoothing

Often it's a good idea to smooth out the rough edges that Painter's Artists Oils brushes deliver, e.g., on the gums of the creature's extra mouths. I use my brush with the Amount 0% setting and tease the areas that need smoothing (**Fig.13**).



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Rendering Bulk

My version of Cipactli has a large, round chest and belly, much like myself, with the exception that his are mottled with a nice pattern. I'm careful to compress the pattern, as it curves out of sight around the edge of his bulk, as this

helps to convey the illusion of three dimensions. Occasionally you'll see an artist apply a pattern as an overlay and in some cases this can flatten the image, where the pattern does not conform to the elements of the image's contours (**Fig.14**).



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Flipping the Image

I regularly flip the image horizontally during my work process. This gives the eye a fresh perspective on the piece and lets you see things you otherwise might have missed. One thing that is obvious right now is that Cipactli's dorsal fin is a bit lost against the background, so I'll need to fix that (**Fig.15**).



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The Dorsal Fin

To make the dorsal fin stand out, first I paint over it with some dark tones, which have the effect of bringing it into the foreground. A subtle pattern would look good, I think, so I create an Overlay layer and set its opacity to 50%. Then, using both high and low saturation colors, I paint a few swirls before dropping the layer to the canvas. I tidy up the loose ends and also add some ragged edges. Some small highlights to these edges give the fin a bit of solidity (**Fig.16**).

Painting the Cliffs

For the background, as well as the Artists Oils brush, I use a basic circular brush with grain. I set the Color Variability controls to H: 12%, S: 1% and V: 1%. That means with each dab of my brush puts, the hue (color) will vary randomly up

to 12% from my current color, the saturation will vary by up to 1% and the value will vary by up to 1% too. This gives a nice, subtle mottling effect ideal for stone or vegetation. Unfortunately it doesn't work with Artist Oils variants (**Fig.17**).

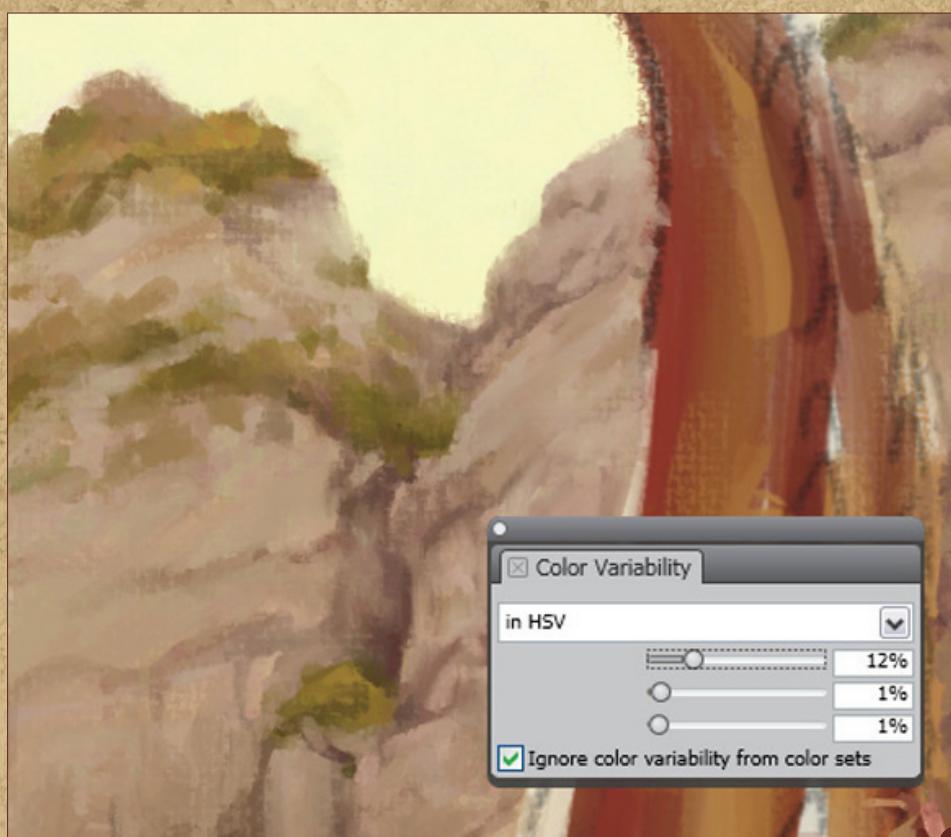
Crocodile Scales

My Cipactli has the tail of a crocodile so I add some chunky scales. I refer to my reference photo of a crocodile in order to get the general

scale shape right, but after I've painted a few I find that the shapes come naturally so I don't need the reference any more. As I mentioned earlier, it's a good idea to use references frequently, but sparingly (**Fig.18**).

Giving Rock Form

I vary my colors regularly when painting detailed rock texture. Where the light strikes the rock, I tend to go for more saturated colors and in



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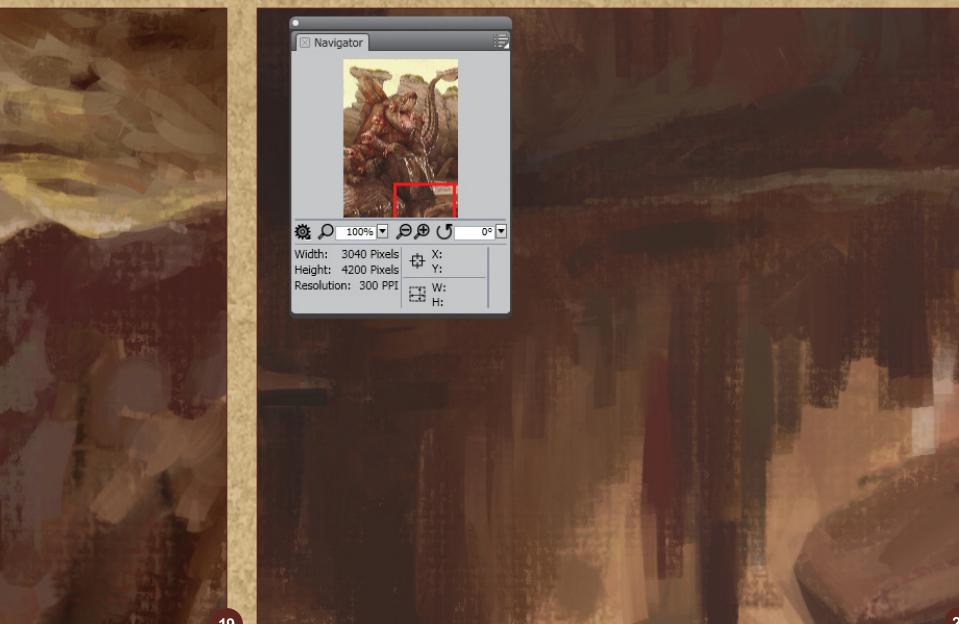
the shadows I use liberal blobs of gray or very desaturated red and orange. The foreground rocks are lit from above by our primary light source – the sun – whilst a stronger, but more localized, light source is present off-canvas to the left. This bright light produces sharp rim lighting, which strengthens the overall form of the rock.

I've made the rocks appear slightly wet, as they would be on the sea shore. I do this by painting subtle reflections on the upper surfaces of the rock. These reflections are nowhere near as defined as you'd see in a mirror, but instead relate more to light and dark. On the far right, the rock reflects a little of the bright sky, whereas directly beneath Cipactli the rock is darker because it's reflecting the body of the beast (Fig.19).

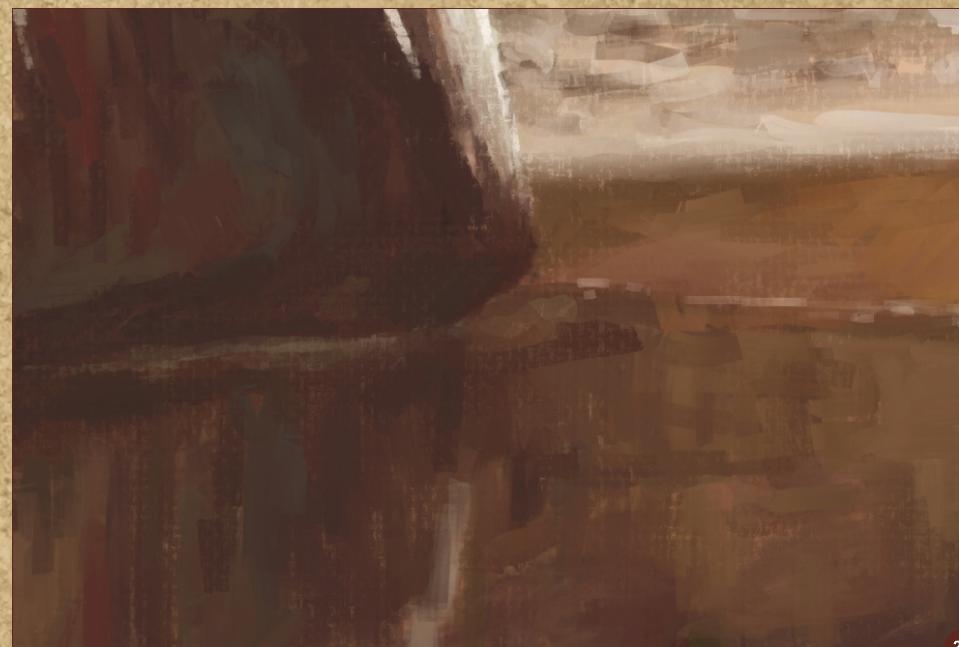
Reflections in Still Water

The foreground water is a rockpool and is undisturbed by the ocean waves rolling in further along the beach. Simulating still water is actually quite easy. I pick the colors of the rock that will be reflected and with a light pen pressure, sketch short lines, mostly vertical but occasionally horizontal, taking care to ensure the reflected forms mirror their real-world counterparts (literally).

In other words, if there is a bright highlight on the rock six inches above the water line, I will



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suggest the same highlight six inches below the waterline for my reflection. These sketchy lines form the generic color of the water because in small quantities, water has no color and either appears transparent, reflective or somewhere in between. Once I've got the desired effect I use the same brush to blend any rough edges (Fig.20).

Transparency in Still Water

There are some submerged rocks in our rockpool. When I've finished the vertical reflective strokes, I dab some paint in there to represent the forms of the rocks. As the rocks get further from the viewer, they merge with the

coloration of the water, as they are obscured by surface reflection.

If you've ever looked directly down into a clean, calm pond you'll notice that there is very little reflection and you can see right down into the water. But as you direct your gaze further and further away, the surface reflection gets stronger and you can see less of what is under the surface. Quickly the surface will become so reflective that you can't see what's underneath at all. That's what's happening here: our rocks become clearer the closer they are to the viewer (Fig.21).

Contrasting Detail

I keep the rocks in the background low-key, so that they don't compete with the foreground in terms of detail and color. They are in shadow, so their value range will be narrower and the color saturation less than the foreground. Because the value range is lower, they will have less detail, and what detail there is can be suggested with broader brush strokes and reliance on the paper texture showing through (Fig.22).

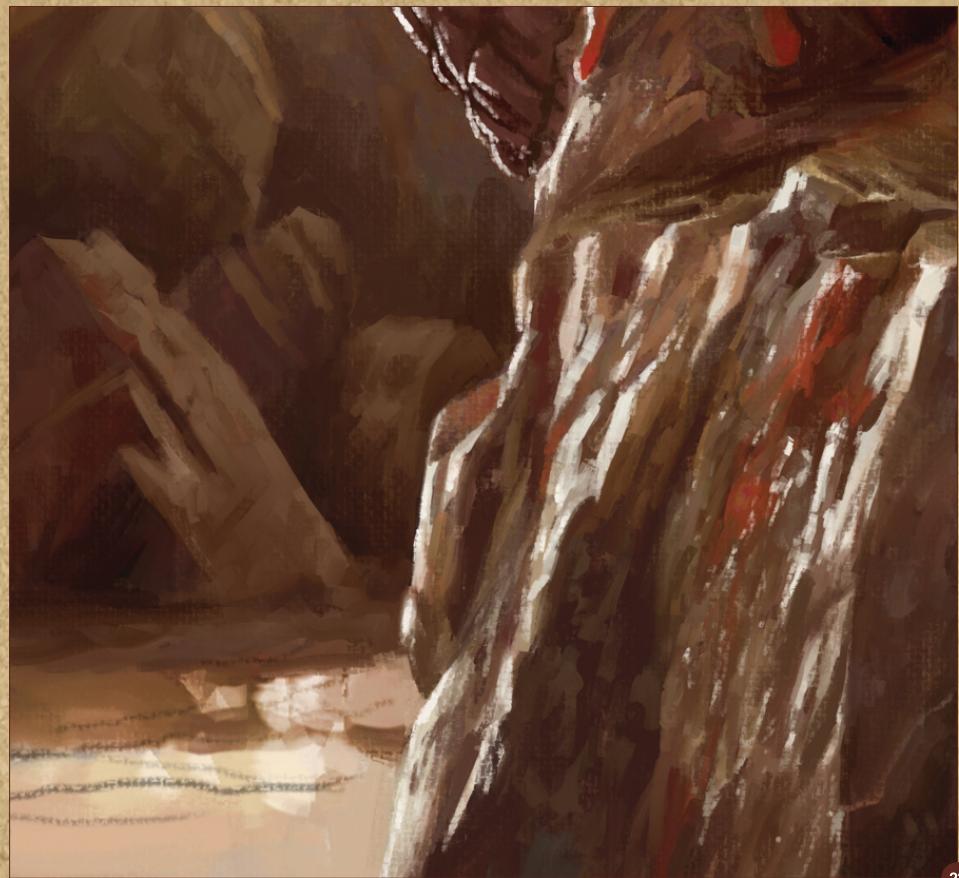
Boosting the Focus

The focus of the piece is Cipactli's head, so I decide to add some extra patterning around his eye to further attract the viewer's attention. I keep the pattern understated and make it resemble the pattern on his dorsal fin (Fig.23).

Time Out

I'm almost done now, so I leave the piece for a couple of days, then come back to it and see if anything needs tweaking. If everything has gone as planned, then only minor matters should be apparent, and in this instance – happily – that appears to be the case.

I decide to make some slight alterations to the shape of Cipactli's head, to get rid of the apparent rubbery flexibility of his upper jaw. I

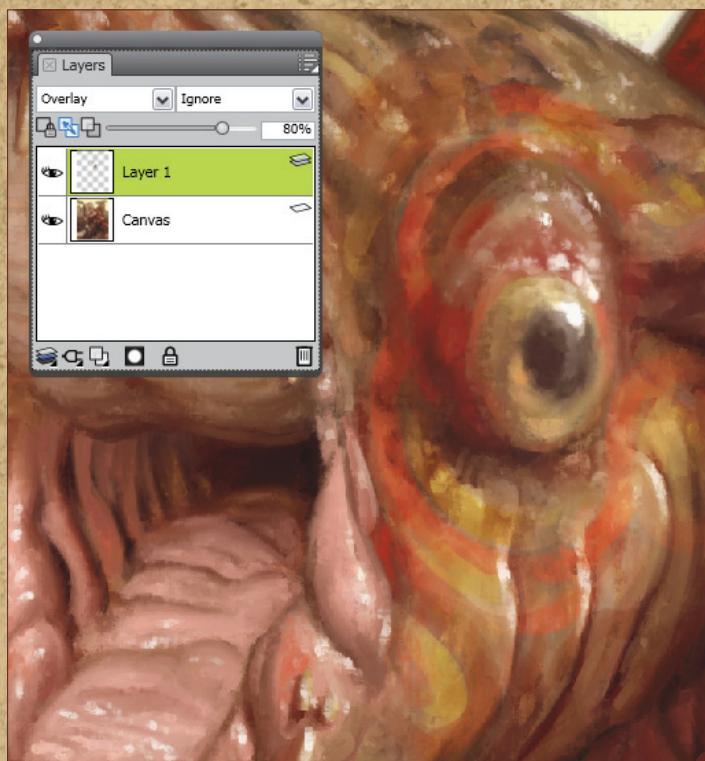


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also add a tiny bit of white foam to the right-most edge of the piece, in order to give the impression that the waves are rushing up the beach behind him.

That done, I resize my final image down to 2480 x 3425 pixels and save it as a TIF.

Thanks for reading and I hope you enjoyed the tutorial.



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Chapter 1: Mountains

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"I usually try to keep the matte painting as photo real as possible during the whole process"

Archetype

Making Of by Francesco Corvino

This month's Making Of is based on an image created for Aaron Sims' sci-fi short *Archetype*. With the use of atmospheric skylines and complex canyon images from his personal collection, Francesco Corvino talks us through how he created this dramatic landscape.



Archetype

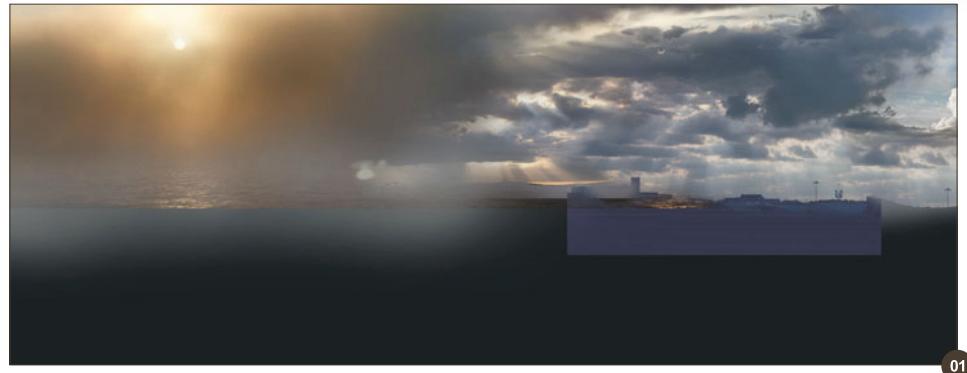
Making Of

Archetype

Software Used: Photoshop

This matte painting for Aaron Sims' short *Archetype* has been made with a variety of techniques (photo manipulation, 3D and a bit of painting to speed up the process).

I started by defining the sky in Photoshop, and therefore the overall lighting of the scene. The camera pans from right to left revealing the giant pumping towers far away, where a battle of robots will take place. I spent time focusing on the transition from the blue sky at the beginning of the shot, to the dusty and more dramatic atmosphere surrounding the towers (**Fig.01**).



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Then I began to add detail in the clouds and on the horizon. I had to spend quite a bit of time color correcting and properly integrating all the different photos necessary to create such a wide sky. I used Curves in Photoshop, which are my favorite tools when it comes to color correcting and integrating photographic elements. Curves offer a huge amount of control and the possibility for the artist to modify very specific segments of the color range in the image (**Fig.02**).

When the sky was roughed in, I chose the first photos to create the complex canyon landscape. I spent some time finding photos of similar canyons in Arizona (not just using the internet, but a library I personally built during a trip with my wife to that state). I did this in order to give a consistent look to the rocks all over the landscape, giving a more natural feel (**Fig.03**).

I kept adding details to the landscape, trying to find a sense to the morphology of the ground. I

wanted the ground to feel complex, carved and mysterious. I chose photos with a particular kind of lighting, with an overcast sky and beautiful spots of light breaking through the clouds. This gave the landscape a charming and intriguing atmosphere. I always try to give my matte paintings a dramatic and deep atmosphere, which makes everything way more appealing to the audience (**Fig.04**).

I assembled some photographs to generate a big lake in the canyon, with an island in the center and a giant rock pillar. I knew that this matte painting would have become a battleground by the final shot. Not only that, but the director wanted to place some big futuristic structures in the canyon to make the environment look more unique and exciting. Adding particular features to the canyon like an



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island, or a giant rock bridge on the left, gave me wonderful places to attract the audience's attention to and therefore to place one of the futuristic structures or some robots fighting (Fig.05).

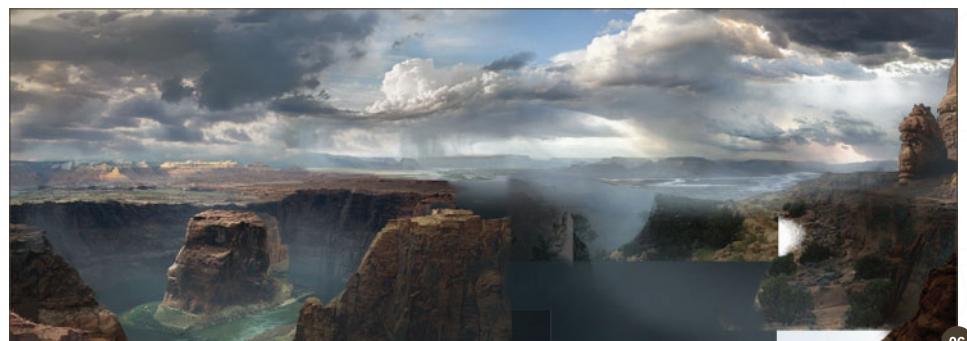
I quickly painted some patches to cover the gaps. At this point the matte painting was coming along. All the different photos placed on the canvas were slowly starting to make sense and blend nicely together. In this situation I focused on the details, doing small color corrections and blending the different photos accurately. In order to blend in a nondestructive way I strongly recommend using the Masking tool in Photoshop. This way you'll be able to erase or add back in parts of the photo in real time. Masking makes it possible to experiment and find your solution (Fig.06).

With another photo of a canyon, I placed a river on the right side of the composition, achieving the overall idea that the landscape is made of deep canyons, carved by water streams. Even in this case I kept building a more and more exciting morphology, with many "moments of depth". This is important, particularly if you plan on doing any kind of camera movement and camera projection afterwards. Instead of having a flat desert, a canyon with all its deep ravines gives you a perfect chance to create interesting camera movements with significant parallax involved (Fig.07).

I finalized the landscape and started to add fog layers, to separate the canyons better. Adding fog and atmosphere, and in general any element



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to increase air density, is one of the main ways to create really deep matte paintings and make shapes stronger and more readable. Many elements of the foreground often tend to blend significantly with the shapes in the background. In these cases it's useful to use atmosphere to outline more of the main elements of the composition. Be careful not to over-exaggerate;

placing too much fog when it's not really necessary can quickly make your work look fake (Fig.08).

At this point I focused on the left side of the frame, increasing the dust in the air to make the atmosphere in that area even thicker and more dramatic. This will fully make sense, when



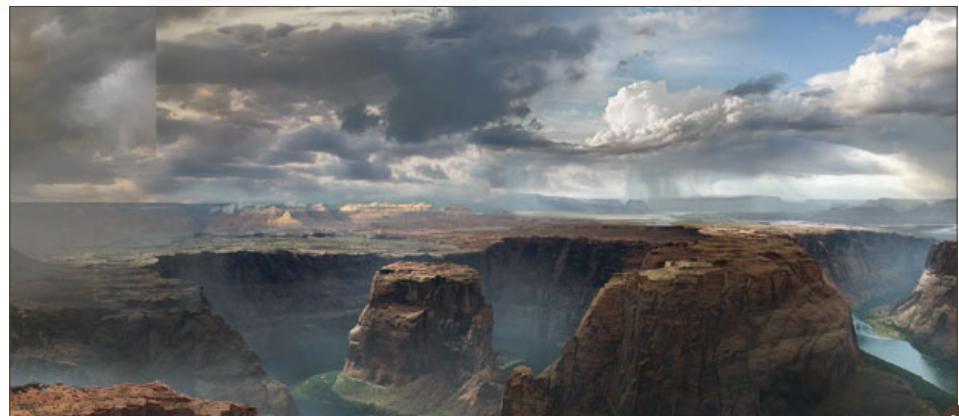
08

Archetype Making Of

the camera moves about in the matte painting, framing the battle that is fought on the left area of the composition. At that point the dust storm will really become a perfect background for such a dramatic moment in the story (**Fig.09**).

I finalized the overall lighting of the scene, adding a nice vignetting on the edges and a flare on the sun. Playing with the curves, I increased the overall contrast. These final adjustments, even if very quick and easy to apply, are absolutely essential to make your scene look "cool". I usually try to keep the matte painting as photo real as possible during the whole process, not worrying too much about the beauty of the image, but just trying to keep everything real and consistent. Towards the end, however, the matte painting needs a "push". The image feels good, but with some more contrast it usually becomes much more appealing, stronger and deeper (**Fig.10**).

I finally added the giant pump towers. I created these in Maya, modeling simple geometries, which I quickly lighted and rendered out as grayscale in V-Ray. In Photoshop I then added some concrete texture for the walls and rusted metal for the tubes that I blended in Soft Light. I

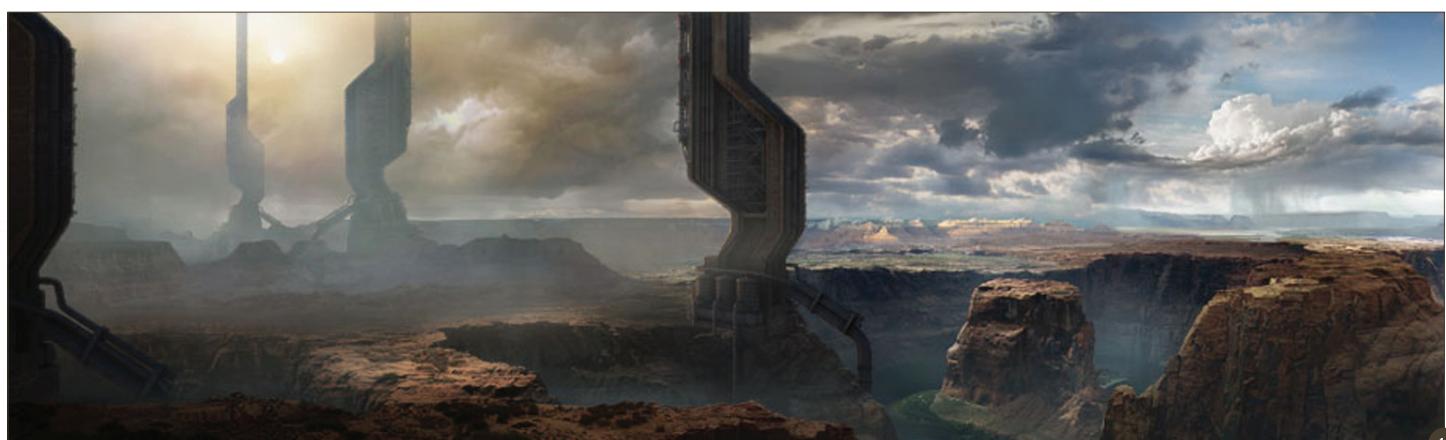


finalized everything, adding some photographic details of refineries and other similar structures in order to give a more industrial feeling to the towers (**Fig.11**).

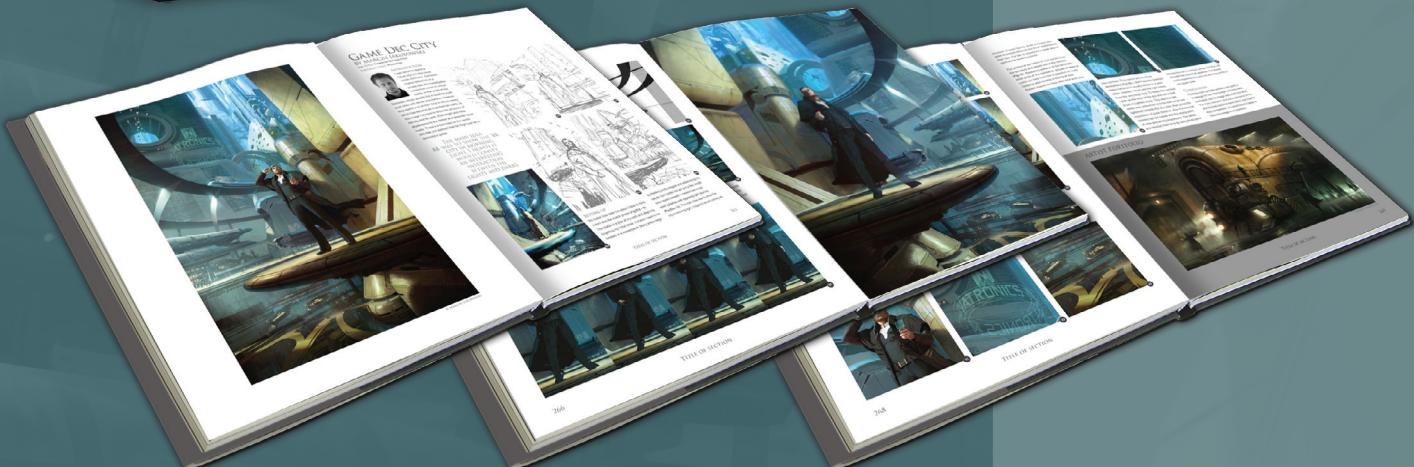
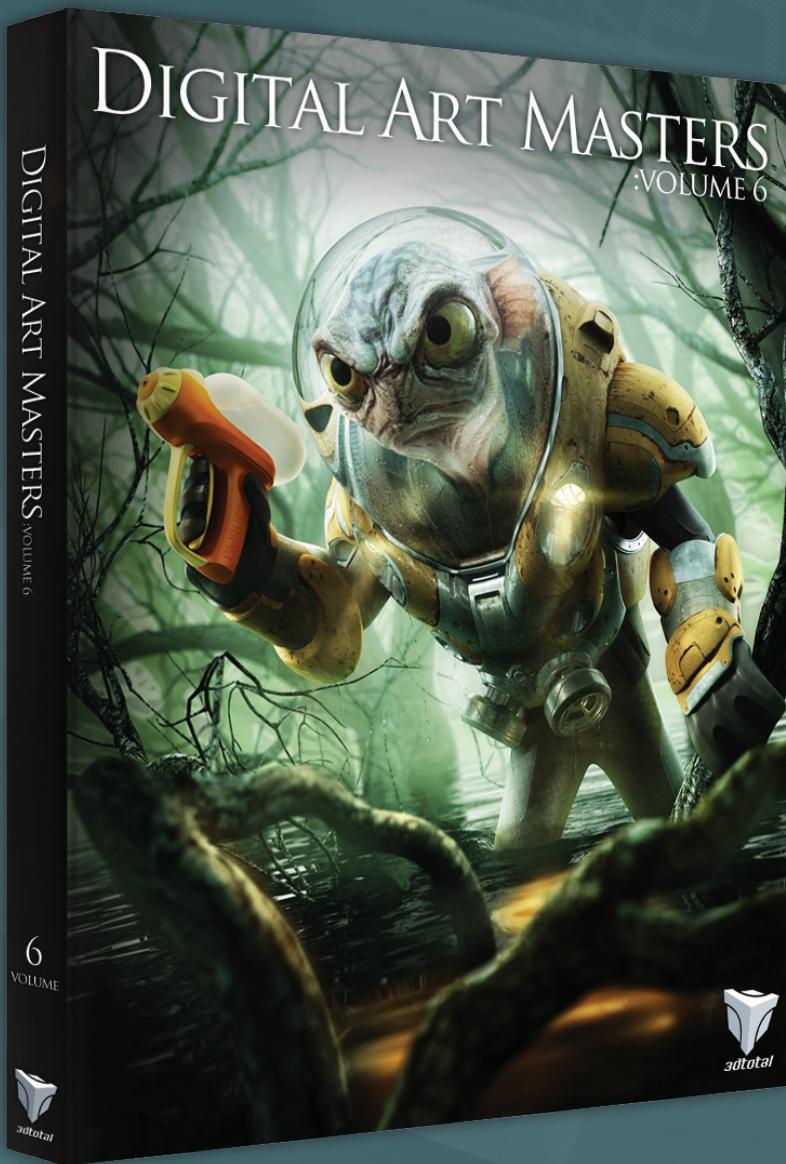
Francesco Corvino

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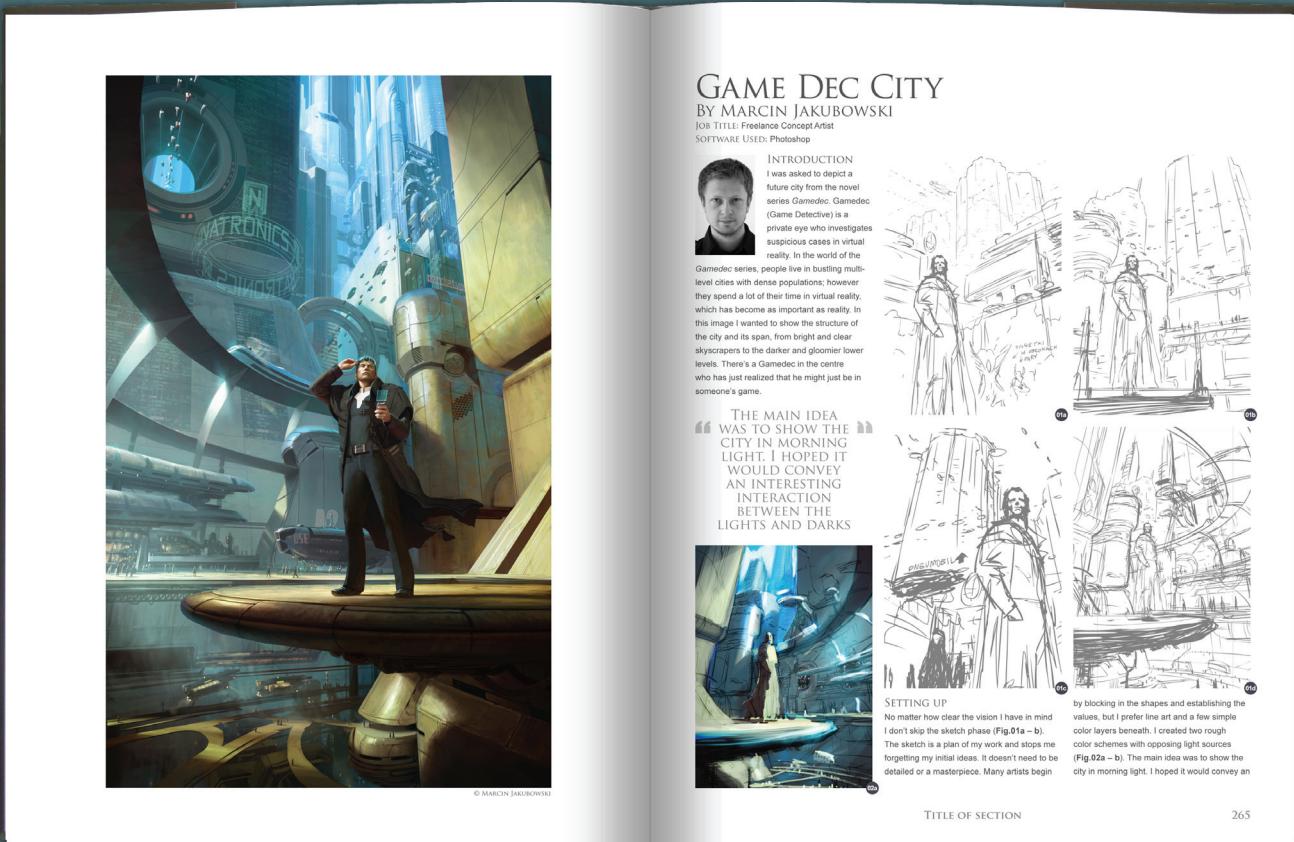
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Is a resource website for the CG community; amongst our growing number of products for CG artists, we produce two monthly downloadable PDF magazines – *2DArtist* and *3DCreative*. We are based in the West Midlands, in the UK, and our intention with our magazines is to make each issue as full of great articles, images, interviews and tutorials as possible. If you would like more information on 3DTOTAL or our magazines, or if you have a question for one our team, please use the links below.

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If you have a CG community website and would like to support *3DCreative* and/or *2DArtist* magazine by showing our banners, please contact Simon at the email address above

